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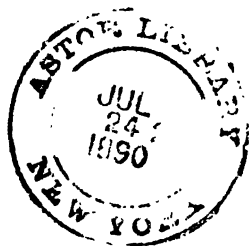
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SECOND EDITION.

# IDA RANDOLPH OF VIRGINIA.

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## CANTO I.

### I.

THREE lofty pines, alone and far away  
From grove and woodland, cast the livelong day  
A grateful shade on yon exhausted plain,  
Where naught but sedge the soil can now sustain.  
Beneath their boughs a one-roomed house is seen,  
So marred by time and rain, that logs and beam  
So open stand, that every driving storm  
Goes whistling through, and shakes its fragile form.  
Within the cabin broken chairs are set  
Around a table where perchance have met

Some men to rest, or pass their time in play —  
A fitting place to while their hours away.  
The gaping walls are crumbling to the floor,  
And at the entrance now there swings no door,  
And hence, by turning, and by glancing through  
The circling plains are always in thy view,  
And far and near thou canst, from either chair  
See every one who tries to trace thee there !

## II.

Though in the cottage cooling zephyrs come,  
'Tis hot and breezeless in the burning sun ;  
That orb, so cloudless, makes the summer day  
Too warm for man on such broad fields to stray ;  
And not a bird, nor living thing is there,  
No verdant lawn, no plant that claims thy care,  
No arch of vines, nor spring nor streamlet near,

No garden blooms, no opening buds appear ;  
But all the barren's clothed with yellow grass,  
A worthless kind scarce noticed as you pass !

## III.

What distant object now attracts the eye ?  
A coach appears ! — approaching swiftly nigh !  
And dashing fast another comes in view,  
At such an hour what have they here to do ?  
And now already they have reached the pine,  
The steeds are check'd, — each driver slacks his line,  
And, springing nimbly, clears the carriage way,  
And tips his cap, the same as if to say :  
“ Your will, my master, let me, please, obey.”  
And now alight within the cabin's shade,  
With graceful ease, with coachman's proffer'd aid,  
Four handsome men, of middle age, and drest

With taste and care, in coat, cravat and vest,  
In jeweled rings, gold studs, and massive chain,  
While each right hand supports and ebon cane.  
No color'd servant now must here remain,  
He hath an ear,—perhaps he hath some brain ;  
“ Awake there, boys ! — no longer needed now,  
Be quickly gone — no matter where or how,  
But come when evening spans the golden west,  
And yonder sun bids man prepare for rest,  
And bring each coach without a failure here,  
Precisely at the hour of six appear.”  
Such were the orders issued to each man,  
Not in the words we use, but shouldst thou scan  
The hidden meaning, thou couldst plainly see  
The import of our lines in sense agree.  
The serfs are gone, the cottage sands are bare ;  
The men are entering — each resumes his chair

Around that table, where, some days before,  
This council met and talk'd their prospects o'er!

## IV.

“Thank God,” said BUTLER, “we have found a place  
Where no dark foe, no servile negro's face  
Intrudes upon us with suspicious ear,  
To catch our whispers, and our schemes to hear;  
And hence we may devise some secret way  
To quell this insurrection of a day  
Which threat'ning thunders through our social sky  
As if an earthquake rock'd us passing by!  
Although, it may be, not a slave hath risen  
Except the fiends who broke the old-time prison  
And kill'd their keeper; but we know not who  
Would strike for freedom like that reckless few,  
Had they a leader, and possess'd the hope

That serfs so poorly arm'd with whites could cope !  
A plan I have matured since last we met,  
Much better far than any offer'd yet,  
Because it ferrets out each faithless heart,  
The wicked from the good it sets apart ;  
'Tis this : we must select some able man,—  
Some faithful stranger, if we only can,—  
And send him nightly and on Sundays too  
Among our blacks, to rouse them, till they do  
Some deed, or rather are prepared to fight,  
We then will seize them and may crush them right !  
They will believe him, and suppose he came  
On purpose from the North to break their chain ;  
Then he can single out each restless soul,  
Can name to us who sways with most control,  
Then we may sell them, or their lives destroy,  
Should we conclude they might the South annoy."



## V.

“Strange plan,” said RANDOLPH, “what thy fears propose;

Sometimes our servants may be secret foes!

But wilt thou say they have not ample cause?

What then? — we should reform our statute laws.

Outraged and trampled, brute-like, in the dust,

And, when degraded, held in stern disgust

Because they manifest such puerile fire,

When we in toil their mental force require.

What fools, what madmen we have grown to be,

Since our best rights we are too blind to see!

You think by prudence and by strength of mind,

By nightly vigils, by arm'd bands combined,

To 'scape that law which hurled Gomorrah down,

That dared to heed not God's rebuking frown.

Vain hope!—that Justice which all men should fear

Is seen relentless, crushing us now here !  
This barren plain, which once rich harvests bore,  
Yon ruin'd cot, whose logs lie scattered o'er  
The field where once a free born white man trod,  
Hath lost its tenant with its fertile sod !  
And why? Through bondage and its blighting curse—  
The sale of souls to fill a bad man's purse !”

## VI.

“Dost thou,” said BUTLER, “crave a martyr's doom ?  
Such bitter censure well deserves a tomb,  
When uttered thus against thy native home,  
And all of earth which thou canst call thine own.  
How proudly selfish thus presume to dare  
To act against us, and decline to share  
The toil,—the conquest which we mean to gain  
O'er all who try to break the vassal's chain.

Thy massive wealth, thy well-established fame,  
Thy honor'd family, thy unsullied name,  
Shall not protect thee if thou darest to turn,  
And, traitor-like, our institutions spurn !  
Lukewarmness now may lose the heavy prize ;  
For this alone we all must sacrifice  
The patriot's love, the life to him most dear,  
His freedom, kindred, all he doth revere,  
Or leave the State, dishonor'd and disgraced,  
Or here be hanged and have his home laid waste !”

## VII.

“ Who, sir,” said RANDOLPH, “ will the hangman be ?  
The bondsmen, when their fetter'd limbs are free ?  
Or those whose numbers are so very few  
That talking bold is all they dare to do ? ”  
“ Hold ! Hold ! ” cried TERRELL, “ Come, this must not be,

I'll pledge my honor RANDOLPH shall agree  
To stand beside us and maintain the laws,  
And risk his life, his wealth, in our good cause,  
Which we can ne'er abandon while we live,  
Unless, like craven fools, we choose to give  
Our all away, and when bankrupt complete,  
Become poor beggars in the world's broad street!"

"Tell me," said DANDREDGE, "where you hope to find  
A person of such trust, whose heart and mind  
Will sanction this wild scheme, and lend his aid  
To capture negroes whom he hath betrayed?"

"I can," said BUTLER, "I will name the man,—  
Young MORTON, of Vermont, with my good plan  
Can rouse the fearless, and soon bring them out,  
And to their simple faith lay down the route  
Which leads to freedom in Victoria's lands,  
Where white and color'd mix in loving bands.

This would deceive them,—then the daring few  
Would stand revealed :—the rest our ropes shall do !

## VIII.

“Shame ! Shame !” exclaimed RANDOLPH ; “Why speak  
that way ?

Thou know’st him not. Permit me then to say  
That noble youth is now my honor’d guest,  
His thoughts, his feelings, — oft to me expressed,—  
Are manly, and disclose a chasten’d heart,  
That could not stoop to act so base a part !”  
Then BUTLER answered, “Aye, but hear my plot ; —  
The major part I had, perchance, forgot, —  
That IDA RANDOLPH hath entire control  
O’er all the thoughts that stir that cherish’d soul ; —  
Her perfect figure, her transcendent grace,  
Her brilliant manners, her angelic face,

Her deep-trained mind, and gentle voice and smile,  
Which doth so well her father's days beguile,  
Hath firmly cast and lock'd love's golden chain  
Around young MORTON, hence through this we claim  
For our good cause his undivided heart,—  
The whole or none ; no half-way traitor's part !  
Should he this project and the task decline,  
Young IDA's arm with his shall never twine.  
Her home, her lands, that youth by force shall leave,  
And one more faithful shall her wealth receive.  
Therefore, to-morrow, at the hour of three,  
RANDOLPH, thou hearest, bring thy guest with thee ;  
But tell him not the scheme that brings him here,  
That point we'll settle when you both appear."

## IX.

RANDOLPH ON BUTLER fixed a *flashing eye*,  
And breathed in cutting tone this stern reply :  
" I am astounded, that an aged sire  
For gross and selfish ends should thus require  
A guileless youth to tread the path of sin,  
When certain ruin must accrue to him !  
As age advances, man should train his heart  
To find in Virtue that which will impart  
A noble bearing and a cheerful mien,  
A pride of honor and a glance serene.  
For then, the Passions having lost their power,  
The soul should blossom, and unfold a flower  
Whose priceless fruitage and immortal bloom  
Should make his grave an unforgotten tomb !  
When God our Father built the world for man,

With Might Omnipotent his fate to plan,  
He made our Nature, that success on earth  
Shall not endure devoid of moral worth !  
That he who will degraded passions serve,  
And, reckless, from the Right, by actions swerve,  
Shall soon, by failure, find that he hath err'd,  
And own that Justice should have been preferr'd !

## X.

“ My friends, take warning ! this is changeless law ;  
And if you will, by deeds, from it withdraw,  
You cannot prosper, and you shall not stand !  
Our present troubles prove this clear command !  
Why not be wise and liberate the slave,  
Since naught on earth but this our State can save  
From that misfortune felt alike by all,  
Who by discarding Right hath found their fall ?



When THOMAS JEFFERSON this cause discussed,  
'I tremble when I think that God is Just'  
He uttered, fearless, both to foe and friend;  
'Because,' said he, 'the Almighty cannot lend  
His aid to us, when slaves for freedom fight,  
But must take sides with those whose cause is right!'  
Why plan rebellions? Why on them depend,  
And deem your hand the subtle scheme can end?  
Beware, my brothers, how you light this fire!  
A word too much, a single spark of ire  
May rouse a whirlwind, and awake a flame  
No force can conquer, and no love restrain!"

## XI.

"Coward!" cried BUTLER, with sarcastic sneer,  
"My cause is just; I *dare* maintain it here!  
My slaves! I bought them; I will not release!"

I'll break the Union to establish peace,  
That all encroachments on conceded rights  
By men in office and their proselytes  
May be defeated, and our noble cause  
Be better guarded by more stringent laws ! ”  
RANDOLPH replied, “ Now hear my honest word,  
Then all objections shall be calmly heard.  
Should we secede, and rival nations make,  
And this Republic into ruins break,  
The South it would three thousand millions cost,  
And years of war, and slaves forever lost !  
The Chinese wall, if ours, in all its strength,  
With its twelve hundred miles or more in length,  
And on our borders, built from sea to sea,  
On foot, on horse, on boats the serfs would flee,  
Regardless of such walls and arm'd commands.  
Our cotton fields would be deprived of hands !

Steamships of war, steel-clad on every side  
(Such France and England for defence provide), -  
We must construct! — for them our coffers drain,  
Or lose the harbors of our vast domain!

## XII.

“Our peerless Union, next to God I love,  
And, till removed to brighter scenes above,  
I'll stand by it till overwhelmed by death,  
And pray for it with all my dying breath!  
The Stars and Stripes shall be my country's flag,  
And *never* here shall float a Traitor's rag!”

“My God! RANDOLPH; can all that ever be?  
Then what will save our cause I cannot see,  
Unless we conquer, and the North subdue,  
And slave States make of all the Old and New!  
You *prove* secession is a deadly curse,

That heaving earthquakes never can be worse !  
Then let vast armies for the Union fight,  
And I will join them if they grant my right.  
From Maine to Texas let *my* slaves be *mine*  
While ministers regard this as no crime,  
No one but God,— no man can set them free,—  
Then make *strong* laws to bind my serfs to me !”

## XIII.

There let them talk ! while we in woods away,  
More pleasing scenes, more fragrant walks survey,  
Where birds their music, shrubs their blooms display,  
And balmy freshness crowns each opening day ;  
Where stands a mansion cool'd by mountain stream,  
Whose foaming current, sparkling, breaks the beam  
Which glistens down through over-arching shade

The axe had spared when this dear home was made.  
Those towering oaks the river flows between  
Have branchless shafts, with creeping vines all green  
Entwined around their trunks so dense and high,  
That they along their banks shut out the sky ;  
While round the dwelling lofty woods appear  
That spread their boughs o'er level ground, all clear  
Of undergrowth, that might obstruct the view  
O'er lawns, whose verdure changing airs renew.  
Come rest with me within this shaded room,  
Or on the porch when reigns the blaze of noon,  
When bright above thee fields of brilliant sky  
Are shining sultry through the forests nigh,  
And see what vistas where these shades divide  
Invite thy step to walks on every side !  
And hear'st thou not a constant gurgling flow  
Of crystal waters forced through rocks below

Yon sheving bank, which bears a fringe of flowers  
That hold their blooms through all the summer hours?

## XIV.

The mansion house thou see'st is large and long,  
In form sharp-gabled, and constructed strong,  
Although in shadow, it presents to view  
An aged fabric faced with boards anew,  
The hall and stairway in the centre stand,  
With double parlors ranged on either hand,  
And these have windows opening towards the stream  
Upon that porch from which we sketch the scene!  
And this retreat is IDA RANDOLPH'S home?  
It is,—and here she never seems alone;  
Some favorite volume, when no guest is near,  
Some rich bouquet, some stroll when skies are clear,  
Some rural seat 'mong rugged rocks concealed,

Some deep recess by her to none revealed,  
Beguile her hours when friends are far away,  
Awakening joyous thoughts the livelong day.

## XV.

On yonder bank, behold! the lovely fair  
Now comes in view, and close beside her there  
A noble youth supports her snowy hand,  
And, talking, leads her slow along the strand,  
While she, contented, twirls her bonnet round  
Till oft its fringes brush the flower'd ground;  
And when they reach'd the step, and came so nigh  
That MORTON raised his foot, she pressed him by,  
And smiling whispered, "Once more down the lawn;  
I cannot leave this walk till day is gone,  
'Tis so delightful idly rambling here,  
When Summer's cloudless sun is setting clear,

And casting shadows broad from ever tree  
O'er hill and stream, o'er mount and lowland lea !  
And hear'st that robin ?—gladsome thrills his note,  
How mellow'd on the air his warblings float,  
As if, like us, he felt this hallowed hour,  
Which calms the soul attuned to feel its power !  
How often have I wander'd here alone,  
How often have I felt if this dear home  
But held one heart in all things like to thee,  
To love, to cherish all these scenes with me,  
How blest, how happy, all my days would be,  
No cause to mar, no foes from whom to flee !”

## XVI.

“IDA ! dear IDA ! angel hearts above,  
With thee and thine this wildwood home will love,  
The clearing sky the rosy clouds adorn,



The silent eve, the silver light of morn,  
The shades of summer dark'ning o'er the world,  
The autumn leaves like crimson flags unfurled,  
The voice of streamlets mountain cliffs among,  
The crumbling seats across their chasms flung,  
The old gray rocks in twilight all the day  
In shadows dense, in pathless woods away,  
Are all to me *unutterably* endeared,  
Because with *thee* I have these scenes revered!"

## XVII.

A night of darkness shrouds the forest home,  
Though lamps are lit within, but one alone  
Lights up that hall, with dimmed and shaded ray,  
Where books are piled, where stands a rich bouquet  
Which IDA gather'd (ere the morn withdrew  
The sparkling gems—the chains of crystal dew)

To deck the table graced by gilded tomes,  
By volumes welcomed in all rural homes,  
By papers fresh with news from every clime,  
By pictured works engraved to please the time.  
But he who leans half resting on that board  
Seems careless of the light the rays afford,  
Although a romance he hath opened wide,  
And IDA seats herself so near his side  
That she half sees the page beneath his eye,  
And yet he reads not? — let him answer why.  
“IDA,” said MORTON, “didst thy father’s brow  
Assume a frown because he knew not how  
We came to linger in our walks so late  
That our repast was long obliged to wait?  
Or is there something deeper far than this?  
A fate that threatens to o’erwhelm our bliss,  
That makes him gloomy and reserved towards me,—

Such chilling silence I am pained to see,  
'Tis so unusual! — so unlike his way,  
That welcome smiles, I thought, would always play  
Around his lips when he received us here,  
As they were wont through all this happy year.  
Perhaps some rival claims from him thy hand,  
And by this coldness I should understand,  
That he is anxious I would soon withdraw,  
If so, farewell! with me his wish is law.”  
The lady trembling turned her face aside,  
And stealthy, from her eye a tear she dried,  
Then turned on his its melting, moistened ray,  
As if was said the worst that he could say.  
Their glances met, and in that look there seem'd  
An interchange of thought, for so I deem'd,  
For in a moment each to each was clasped  
As if that meeting was on earth their last,

And there was mingled with each sobbing word  
That solemn "*never*" such as few have heard.  
Now soft and noiseless near the lovers' side,  
By stern RANDOLPH a door was open'd wide,  
And ere young MORTON could withdraw his arm  
The father's hand was placed upon his form!  
So startled by the act, the youth arose,  
But what was said, 'tis plain he scarcely knows,  
For her it seemed he would forgiveness seek,  
Yet could but bow when he essayed to speak.  
"Father! O father!" cried the blushing maid,  
And hid her face as on his breast she laid  
Her burning cheek, and bow'd with shame her brow,  
As if to act her part she knew not how.  
Then kindly on the two the parent smiled,  
And taking by the hand his only child,

He placed and prest it close in EDWARD's palm  
As if he sanctioned their hymeneal bann !

## XVIII.

"Tell me, dear father, why this eve so sad,  
So coldly kind, as if, perchance, we had  
Incurred thy censure by some thoughtless word  
Or careless deed, of which thou hadst just heard?"  
"Events of moment," then RANDOLPH replied,  
"From you, my precious ones! I will not hide;  
This day, with equals, I was spurn'd to dust,  
And traitor called, because, when we discuss'd  
The public safety, I was bold to say  
That in our progress slaves are in the way!  
Men talk of freedom and the rights of man,  
Of papers publish'd despots dare not damn,  
And shout, Hurrah! the great Republic's free!

While Europe bows to kings the fetter'd knee !  
'Tis falsehood's fiction — an immoral lie ! —  
And statesmen know it ! — fools may facts deny !  
Mark this, no Commonwealth where lives a slave,  
If south or west of old Potomac's wave,  
Will suffer man in public halls to preach,  
Or in the schools her free-born sons to teach,  
That human bondage is a curse to them,  
And out of saints will make degraded men !  
Ay, truth most sacred ! God-established truth,  
We dare not teach to our unlettered youth,  
Lest they, in manhood, should exert their power  
To change the statutes under which we cower.  
Let but the pastor in the pulpit stand,  
And with his Bible spread beneath his hand,  
Declare Jehovah wills to bond and free  
The rights of life so much enjoy'd by thee,

And they at once will crush him as a foe,  
Because he tells them what they fear to know.  
To morrow, EDWARD, thou shalt ride with me,  
And in our council thou shalt blush to see  
The ruling spirits of the present day  
Denounce a freeman, and his rights gainsay  
The very instant that he breathes a word  
That might this Institution's peace disturb.  
Error, 'tis said, we safely tolerate  
When Truth is free to meet it in debate ;  
But here, throughout this rich and broad domain,  
Can I a hearing in this cause obtain ?  
Why no ! They dare not meet me face to face,  
And in discussion trust their brittle case,  
But grasp a weapon, and in fiend-like ire  
Demand my silence, and consent require !  
And *this* where I was *born* ! My God, forgive !

In such a thralldom man should blush to live !  
Millions who have no slaves are kept in chains,  
And scarce three hundred thousand-despot brains  
Rule over them, and blind with fulsome talk,  
Till all so fetter'd in life's lowest walk  
Are sunk in bondage just so near the slave  
That they the right of suffrage have to waive,  
Unless, submissive, they consent to vote  
For those who will the blasting cause promote !  
Ah, me ! if in the South we dared to teach  
The truths which in the North you boldly preach,  
I'd rouse the white man in his cabin den  
To vote for whom he pleased, or die like men !”

## XIX.

A pleasant morn began that sultry day,  
When, on the barren's hot and pathless way,



RANDOLPH and MORTON rode in silent mood,  
No happy thoughts, no cheerful words intrude.  
Soon in the distance they beheld the pine,  
And saw assembling at the stated time  
Those restless men who in the cabin walk,  
And now review, perchance, in earnest talk  
The reckless scheme contrived the eve before,  
Which now, 'tis hoped, their wisdom will ignore !  
“ Welcome,” cried BUTLER, as they entered in,  
“ Thy guest we welcome ; warmly welcome him !  
What new suggestion hast thou got to make ?  
Not any, I presume. Then we must take  
The plan proposed, which all of us well know  
Will triumph sure, and outroot every foe.  
To thee, *dear* MORTON, I will just explain :  
Among our blacks (which ones we cannot name)  
Are restless souls, who may, at any time,

By secret meetings all our slaves combine  
Into a lawless mob, and strike for life,  
Till we in slumber feel the deadly knife !  
Fear may advise us to prepare and arm,  
But Wisdom says at once, Remove the harm,  
And on the faithless lay an iron grasp,  
And ere he rises weld his fetters fast ;  
And so say I, and doubtless all agree ;  
Therefore for this we have much need of thee.  
A meeting thou shalt call. With hundreds near,  
The cut-throat coward casts aside his fear,  
And speaks unguarded when he gains applause,  
Becomes convinced that all have joined his cause.  
Thou must applaud them, and right plainly say,  
You shall be free, and point to them the way ;  
And when at last excited to revolt,  
Then mark the fiends most anxious to assault,

And we will hang the dogs before the day  
Gives them a time to sharpen knives to slay!"

## XX.

"Enough," cried MORTON, "I can plainly see  
The gulf of ruin thus prepared for me!  
To act a villain! To become a spy!  
To such debasement I shall not comply!"

"What, sir," said BUTLER, "wilt thou dare decline  
To merit IDA!—thus her hand resign?  
The wealth she's heir to, and that noble name?  
Who, sir, gains these, at once achieves a fame!  
Unless thou aidst us cheerfully to defeat  
The cunning knaves with whom we must compete,  
Thou shalt, without her, instant leave the State,  
Or suffer, if thou stay'st, the felon's fate!  
Thou art suspected, and the only way

The fatal charge most nobly to gainsay,  
We offer now, and urge thee to embrace,  
That thy good deeds may cancel the disgrace ! ”  
“ Strange fate ! ” said EDWARD, “ I am welcome here !  
What legal right hast thou to interfere  
In my arrangements of a home for life ?  
Or dictate schemes to me surcharged with strife ?  
Am I a slave, who dare not choose a bride  
Unless, in fetters, cringing at thy side,  
I bind myself to serve a sinking cause,  
By heading sham rebellions to your laws ?  
I *scorn* the project ! I despise the soul  
That could for this my heart's career control ! ”  
“ Traitor,” cried BUTLER, with a flashing eye,  
And lip that quiver'd in his stern reply ;  
“ If Paul, the Apostle of our God, were here,  
He should, by preaching, make this cause appear

Supremely just, or not a single word  
Upon this subject should from him be heard !  
And dost thou think to make this State thy home,  
And our RANDOLPH'S domain, for life, thine own ?  
And yet refused to lend a little aid  
To conquer foes that would our hearths invade ?  
If such a weakness hath possess'd thy brain,  
Thou shalt ere long be undeceived again ;  
For, by my honor, I this day declare  
That he who will not by his presence share  
The daily vigils now imposed on all  
By dangers threat'ning instant to enthrall,  
He shall, relentless, be expell'd the State,  
Should he depart not when he learns his fate !  
Now read this paper, signed but yesterday,—  
A binding compact, holding thee at bay  
Till common sense, or prudence, guides thy will,

Till what we ask of thee thou canst fulfil !  
What ! blush, dost thou, to see the honor'd name  
Of our RANDOLPH thy mad career restrain,  
By thus endorsing what is written there,  
Which proves that for our cause he hath some care ? ”

## X X I.

“ Let me,” said TERRELL, “ what seems dark explain,  
Lest he, for this, his noble host should blame :  
We are a people of peculiar taste,  
When force will answer, words we never waste  
In contest kindled to o'erwhelm a foe,  
Yet what may come we seldom pause to know !  
Our common friend, reluctant to agree  
To ask for that which we demand of thee,  
Was very anxious to reject the scheme,  
And begg'd us not to press to such extreme ;

But we insisted! — to his pride appeal'd —  
And then at last he was obliged to yield,  
And sign'd with us to execute the plot  
With thy connivance! — thus we fix'd thy lot.  
Be not astonished! In this favored land,  
By worth, slave-owners hold the chief command,  
Because our knowledge, and our strength of mind,  
Our open hearts, by social life refined,  
Exalt us far above the toiling class,  
As if prepared by fate to rule the mass;  
And hence, as masters in the Commonwealth,  
In courts of law, in every board of health,  
In House and Senate,—in the Cabinet, too,—  
We reign supreme! Without us could ye do?"  
"Aye, would nobly try!" "Would ignobly fail,  
And still against our institutions rail,  
Till Reformation shook the Union through,

And made the Constitution one-half new !

We will not trust you ; we must hold the reins,

And guide the Nation harnessed in our chains,

Till slaves are useless, and the cotton grown

No market finds in Europe or at home.

Concede us this, and then we hope to see

Good common-sense work out such change in thee

That we can tolerate thy presence here,

And in thy movements feel or have no fear."

" Well, well," said MORTON, " since my *faithful* friend

Hath pledged his word, I will assistance lend,

To meet the compact most unwisely penn'd,

Provided, first, you will this phrase amend :

Expunge entirely all which can embrace

His slaves, because I cannot, face to face,

Persuade them to revolt and break their chain,

For they would treat me with deserved disdain !



I know his bondsmen, and they know me well,  
And while I live, they shall not hear me tell  
The startling tales which I would have to form  
To rouse among them dark Rebellion's storm !  
Sir Walter Raleigh, when his cloak he cast  
For Bess to tread on, till wet soil she pass'd,  
Ye think did nobly, and record the deed  
As something worthy of a royal meed.  
Why ! IDA's slaves are so attach'd to her,  
That every one I know would much prefer  
To give his body for a stepping stone,  
That she might walk in honor'd safety home !  
Therefore, what prospect could there ever be  
That serfs like hers with felons would agree  
To burn your buildings, or engage to smite  
The hand that nursed and always used them right ? ”

## XXII.

"Well said," cried DANDREDGE, "and we must accept  
So fair an offer, that they shall be kept  
Apart secure on that eventful night  
When he instructs our slaves to plan their flight.  
This very moment I conceived a way  
That will induce the blacks at home to stay,  
Although they might hear restless bondsmen say  
A meeting would be held, and state the day :  
RANDOLPH must organize a grand levee,  
One hundred guests at least there ought to be,  
And then with music we can pass the night.  
Now, such a scene gives every serf delight ;  
Then tell the negroes that they must remain ;  
Of course they will, because the motive's plain,—  
At least to them it would at once appear,—

That they could not be spared to wander here ;  
But ask in secret all our slaves to come  
To this *lone cottage* when that day is done,  
And then address them with a fervent zeal,  
And when thou hast discern'd what ones should feel  
A stern rebuke, or even death perchance,  
Then come and join us in the welcome dance,  
For there thou canst communicate with us,  
And, as there will be nought we need discuss,  
Convey their names upon a paper slip,  
Then in the morning they shall feel the whip.  
The party shall we have next Friday eve ?  
What sayst thou, RANDOLPH ; canst thou then receive  
A host of friends with all their ladies fair,  
Thy smiles and banquet and rich wines to share ? ”  
“ Of course, a welcome I will give to all  
Whom IDA may select to grace the ball,

---

And I will pledge thee every one shall meet  
With those whose words will be a mental treat."

## XXIII.

The council closed ;—the sun began to shine  
In milder beams beneath the cottage pine ;  
The evening breeze the leaves already stir,  
And fragrant airs come wafted from the fir ;  
The distant groves, the clouds and hills in view,  
The crystal sands, the sedge of golden hue,  
Are losing fast the orb's descending ray,  
As Twilight shuts the gilded page of Day.

## XXIV.

While on the landscape shines the evening star,  
And round it cluster glitt'ring worlds afar,  
RANDOLPH and MORTON ride their steeds alone,

And as they linger on their pathway home,  
They talk of BUTLER and his reckless plan,  
And all its features now more wisely scan.

"I hoped," said EDWARD, "to have heard from thee  
Some compromise, at once absolving me  
From calling meetings to detect the foe,  
For what the sequence, God alone can know!  
Should they divulge it to the startled world,  
Ere you could interpose I might be hurl'd  
A mangled corpse within some cave or wood,  
To moulder there, or be the wild dog's food."  
"Fear not," said RANDOLPH, "thou mayst feel resigned ;  
That well-formed paper which we all have signed  
Shall circulate abroad, both far and near,  
The moment when thou think'st it should appear,  
And that will shield thee here against mistrust,  
And misconception everywhere adjust.

Besides, our influence in the country round,  
In this adventure will, of course, be found  
An ample safeguard in the hour of need,  
Shouldst thou on us e'er call to intercede!"

## CANTO II.

### I.

THE morning breaks ;—the beams of golden light  
In cloudless splendor fast dispel the night,

And so refulgent gleams the orb of day,

The fountains sparkle in his glancing ray,

While round the building fragrant zephyrs sigh,

And wave the rose, whose opening blossoms lie

Along the porch, and up the pillars twine,

Where grapes in clusters load the trellis'd vine.

“How sweet the air ! how pure—how freshly bland !”

Young IDA said, as soft she leaned her hand

On EDWARD'S arm, and paced with him the floor

Which lay leaf-shaded 'neath her mansion door.

But while she spoke, through all the forest range  
She saw portentous signs of sudden change ;  
The air in billows, cool'd in regions high,  
Came rolling forth along the heated sky,  
And, bearing onward clouds of dusky hue,  
O'ershaded fast the landscape stretched in view.  
And then low thunder reached the listening ear,  
And then a silence came,—and then more clear  
A louder echo rolled athwart the West,  
And lightnings glimmer'd o'er a far hill's crest !

## II.

“Perchance for rain we must this day provide,”  
The maiden said, “and then will it subside  
Ere evening comes, when we expect our friends ?  
How much our pleasure on this change depends !  
I hope sincerely every guest will come,



Though it should storm till all the day is done,  
For I am certain it will not restrain  
The Butler family, whom we all disdain,  
And hence I would prefer to welcome all,  
For how perplexing if but few should call!"

"I wish — I *pray*!" said EDWARD, "it will *rain*  
Till all the roads cannot the floods contain,  
And fill the paths, and swamp each public way,  
Till black and white at home perforce must stay.  
My heart is dying! — yet it will not die,  
But like the Lost, whose fate provokes a sigh,  
It clings to life, yet hath of life no love,  
No peace on earth! — no hope of rest above!"

"Why, EDWARD MORTON! — art thou crazed or mad?  
Dost thou not jest? Or art thou really sad?  
Confess to me, thou must, the reason why  
Thou speakest thus, with such a frowning eye;

Come, tell me truly! Why despondent now?  
Is BUTLER'S son the cause? Oh, tell me! How  
Can this displease thee? I will act my part  
With studied coolness to repulse his heart.  
Have I offended? — have I asked one guest  
Against whose presence thou wouldst now protest  
Had I the boldness to recall the act,  
Or by my will couldst it at once retract?  
Do cheer up, EDWARD; — wilt thou not, for me?  
No cause hast thou in sober guise to be;  
For my sake do not sigh, or think so much  
Of trifling things, which scarce my feelings touch!"

## III.

Then MORTON answered, "I have cause to grieve,  
I must be absent more than half this eve;  
Nay! — do not ask me why or whence I go,

Some business calls me ! More than this to know  
Would only cause thee to interrogate  
That urgent motive ! — which, should I relate,  
Would mar thy pleasure ; hence, let it suffice,  
And question not what seems a strange advice,  
Be prudent now, and thou the whole shalt hear  
In proper time ; — in this I am sincere ! ”

“ Why, thou art selfish ! — first to pray for rain,  
Because thou canst not here with us remain,  
And then to hide from me what I should know,  
The whence and wherefore thou to-night must go !  
Be *careful*, EDWARD ! — snares are set for thee.  
A horrid disregard of right I see  
In BUTLER’S movements since thou crossed his path ;  
His looks, his smiles, betray a subtle wrath.  
His son he thinks can visit me again  
If thou wert banished from this dear domain.

I am impressed that I should grasp thy arm,  
And keep thee here from some impending harm!  
Oh, EDWARD MORTON, *do not leave me now!*  
Are we not blest by love's most sacred vow?  
For my dear sake regard my falling tears,  
Or must my bright young life be crushed by fears?"  
"My dearest IDA, do not weep for me;  
A few short hours will bring me home to thee!"

## IV.

The sun went down, and brought the dreaded time  
To meet in secret at the cottage pine,  
From hill and vale, from swamp and cabin wall,  
From forge and field, from lonely planter's hall,  
With hopes excited high, the color'd race  
Come pouring forth with slow and stealthy pace,  
Then, moving faster as they reach the plain,

From all sides gathering press the servile train,  
Till in the cottage and around it stand  
A motley gang — an outraged, strong-arm'd band!  
Among the crowd a few keen ones are seen,  
Whose eagle glance, and step, and haughty mien,  
Betray at once the Anglo-Saxon sire,  
The nerve to dare, the soul to feel his fire!  
And all controlling, there is one whose fame  
For strength and courage makes his single name  
A host, where insults wake the wrath of those  
Who inly feel man owners are their foes,  
However much the law hath made the knaves  
Proud, lordly masters, and the meek their slaves  
His name is BARTRAM, but they call'd him Ire,  
Because, when struck, a light like scathing fire  
Flash'd from his eye, and made the foe recoil  
As though a rifle crash'd in their turmoil!

Instant, among them, and on every side,  
And through the cabin, all were closely eyed  
By him, with caution, and such sleepless care,  
No spy could lurk, no white man nestle there;  
And then he posted sentinels all around  
With pine torch lamps, which brightly lit the ground,  
That they might see if intermeddlers came,  
Or treacherous comrades dared to leave the train.

## V.

Now, unattended, when the clouds of night  
Had wrapt in darkness every orb of light,  
A single horseman fast approached the place,  
So well disguised that few could know his face.  
'Twas EDWARD MORTON! —What hath lured him here?  
Go look on her who is to thee most dear,  
And ask thy heart what thou for her wouldst give,

To make her thine, with thee through life to live ;  
And then remember, that which he must pay  
For IDA'S hand, must here be staked to-day.  
A subtle speech he must address to them,  
That he may learn if there are faithless men  
Among those slaves, who had, of course, the power,  
Perhaps the will, to slay at any hour !  
So dense around him all his audience stood,  
That EDWARD deem'd his speech, most likely, could  
Be heard as well expounded from the steed,  
As though he stood among them on the mead.  
Therefore, while mounted, he at once began  
To trace their fate, and all their hopes to scan !

## VI.

“ Poor souls of darkness ! ” he exclaimed to them,  
“ While in your bosoms dwell the hearts of men,

You love your wives, and love your children too,  
Would God have made this so, if he made you  
So much another's that you cannot say  
'These whom we love, with us through life shall stay' ?  
What ! can eternal justice be unjust ?  
And give you love of offspring, if you must  
At any hour be torn from them away,  
And feel the breaking heart dare not gainsay.  
Your innate feelings spurn the servile state,  
For God did not for this your souls create ;  
For in your natures — in each human mind —  
Propensities like ours we always find.  
Ay ! you and I have seen the aged sire,  
Whose limbs, when happy, never toil could tire  
Nor heat enfeeble, — neither wet nor cold  
Subdue to weakness, till his master sold  
His wife and children, and thus stripp'd him bare,



And left him nothing but the tears of prayer!  
In one so broken, with his feelings wreck'd,  
Could aught but fiends, of him, in toil, expect  
The strength of manhood, and the buoyant tread  
Which met no labor and no fate with dread!  
Now watch him, sinking in his daily task;  
How hard he tries! — how weak his trembling grasp!  
O'erpress'd with sorrow, all his powers fail,  
Untold emotions o'er his strength prevail;  
No brave son near him to respect his age,  
No wife to soothe him, none his pangs assuage,  
He dies unpitied, and in dying gives  
His all to him who by such labor lives!  
Is this your fate? now tell me, can it be!  
Oh! blush with shame! if you can tamely see  
A parent's tears and blood distain your path  
And yet for him awake no saving wrath!"

## VII.

While speaking thus, a deep and ominous groan  
Of shatter'd feeling, breathed in smothered tone  
And startling accents, broke the silent night,  
And then a gnashing curse, resolved to smite,  
Came crashing louder, and aroused each heart  
To nerve his arm to grasp the fatal dart.  
Then twenty voices (aye, there might be more,  
If all were counted, than a single score)  
Began to speak, and claim the listening ear,  
And from the weak in heart to banish fear !  
Then EDWARD mark'd, and fixed within his mind  
Each savage vassal whom he saw inclined  
To strike for freedom ! to revenge the blow  
Which oft had laid his weeping children low.  
He felt rejoiced the loathsome work was o'er,

And inly thankful he had said no more  
Than was essential to inflame their ire,  
And hoped they would in words expend its fire;  
Then turning from them with abrupt adieu,  
And scarcely noticed, he at once withdrew.  
When he was gone, the bold among the crowd,  
In gestures fierce, in language reckless, loud,  
Proclaim'd that BARTRAM should assume command,  
And said, with him they could all foes withstand.  
The wily hero, from the cabin door  
Look'd on their movements, and survey'd them o'er  
A moment silent, and then sternly said,  
"The master's blood his household slaves must shed;  
But when? this evening, or a fortnight hence?  
My counsel is the fight must now commence,  
For he who trusts his fate in plots of strife  
To those whose triflings cause no risk of life,

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Should fix not with them any time to slay,  
A week to come, much less some future day,  
For human feeling may at last relent,  
And while it dreads with awe the dark event,  
Disclose to others all the secret scheme ; —  
Then comes revenge, and burnings end the scene !  
There is to-night, at old RANDOLPH'S, a crowd  
Too brainless idle, too ungodly proud,  
Themselves to dress, or wash, or comb their hair,  
Or brush the dust from clothes they seldom wear,  
Or e'en to pray, except when nearly dead,  
And then they utter words so careless said,  
Without a feeling or a human thought,  
Or look which shows they ever cared for aught ;  
Such is my master — all his family too ;  
And such, I doubt not, those who hold o'er you  
The legal right to mould or guide your will,

To sell your children, or your kindred kill !  
Shall not rebellion break our fetters there,  
Ere they or others can for us prepare  
The weapons of defence, or send for aid  
To those who make the soldier's art their trade ?  
Within the precinct of yon distant wood  
Are cut and gathered now, where once they stood,  
A massive pile of stakes, whose ample strength  
And well proportioned parts, in size and length,  
Exactly meet our wants, and can supply  
The arms we need, when foes to foes are nigh !  
The bayonet's bloody charge will scarcely slay  
The close-rank'd files, or better clear the way  
Than those young timbers, if we use them well,  
Resolved that nought but death our might shall quell !  
The sword and rifle are unknown to you,  
But pikes the strong in arm can handle true ;

But I enjoin you to remember this,  
That in close action you may never miss ;  
Charge at the face, or breast, or just below,  
And do not raise the point to strike your foe,  
And move compact, advancing side by side,  
And in the rush to close do not divide ;  
Now rise and follow me, that each may take  
And sharpen with the axe his battle stake ! ”

## CANTO III.

### I.

**I**T is the midnight hour in IDA's home,  
The lamps, all brilliant, shed through hall and  
dome

A mellowed lustre, and illumine so bright  
The forest foliage with such gleams of light  
The trees in shadow stand completely drawn  
In perfect outline o'er the verdant lawn ;  
The air is still, the shades like islands lay ;  
No leaflet stirs, no winds with brambles play ;  
But round the dwelling, and in room and hall  
The music's strains in softest cadence fall ;  
And happy guests, in groups, are listening near,

While some, in pairs, on distant seats appear,  
Some in the parlors still prolong the dance,  
And some with favorites all their joys enhance  
By strolling far among the half-lit trees,  
Where they can whisper loving words that please.  
But hark ! what war-whoop shakes the solid earth ?  
That sound hath silenced all the voice of mirth !  
The maidens blanch, the frighten'd children cry,  
The howl of dogs proclaims some peril nigh,  
The men, close crowding, gaze with speechless air,  
Those in rush out, the out drag in the fair,  
Uncertain whence the cause, or why, or where,  
The sound that shook, and made them, trembling,  
stare !  
'Twas but a moment of suspense to them,  
For instant, indoors dash'd a score of men  
With shouts of carnage, and a crash that broke



The chairs, the tables, and by strong thrusts smote  
The arm uplifted, scattering prostrate o'er  
The dead and living on a blood-stain'd floor!  
While those down trampled raise in vain the hand,  
And beg for mercy slaves that o'er them stand.  
Within one corner of that crowded hall,  
With back protected by each massive wall,  
Stands BUTLER, fighting, arm'd with half a chair,  
And bowie knife, which all such tyrants wear!  
The moment BARTRAM fix'd on him his eye,  
With shout that thrill'd he sprang towards him so  
nigh,  
It cleared the cowards that were kept at bay,  
And gave him whom he sought through all the fray!  
The jewel'd hand which held the dagger fast,  
With iron sinews BARTRAM tightly grasp'd,  
And turned the point against his master's cheek,

And from the throat soon plough'd the power to speak ;  
So fierce the conflict, and so fast the blood  
Distain'd the floor on which they struggling stood,  
That numbers paused and gazed upon the scene,  
Although still raged the combat on the green !  
Then BUTLER, staggering, droop'd aside his head,  
And for a moment seem'd among the dead,  
His open hand unclasped the bloody knife,  
And then once more there rose the signs of life,  
But at the instant that he raised his eye,  
And mutter'd feebly a complaining cry,  
The dirk was plung'd within his heaving breast,  
And back he fell, and falling sank to rest.

## II.

Virginia's courage hears her maidens' shriek,  
From room to room with wringing hands they seek

A shelter, and implore the strong, the brave,  
Their fragile forms from slaughtering fiends to save !  
At last, 'tis answered — woman's wild appeal  
The hero's heart can never cease to feel ;  
The youths in rank now firmly meet the foe,  
With knife to knife return them blow for blow,  
And, moving on in one compacted band,  
With mental power and art to aid, they stand  
The shock which hurl'd their comrades down when they  
The onset met, without the arms to slay !  
A single shot, well aim'd, struck BARTRAM'S head,  
And as he tumbled, and they saw him dead,  
His men, disheartened, ceased to press the fight,  
And safety sought at once by hurried flight !

## III.

The foe hath fled, except the few who lay  
In porch and parlor, in each passage way,  
With shatter'd limbs, or wounds that keep them there,  
Without the strength to 'scape so foul a snare.  
DANDREDGE and TERRILL in the mansion died,  
Where they attempted, but in vain, to hide  
From their own slaves, who found them crouch'd away,  
As children nestle when engaged at play.  
Poor RANDOLPH fell, perhaps in self-defence,  
For where he lay the conflict raged intense,  
And clashed terrific all the time they fought,  
And thus most doubtless was his ruin wrought.  
Though nearly dead, and bleeding fast away,  
He moved his lips as though he would convey  
To those around him, ere he left the earth,

Some treasured word, or fact of real worth.  
The guests about him, with his servants' aid,  
Now bore him gently to his couch, and laid  
On it his bruised and blood-stained form to rest,  
And then a snow-white sheet spread o'er his breast.

## IV.

When lowering vapors all obscure the day,  
And scarce a sunbeam o'er the waters play,  
Hast thou not sometimes seen the brow of eve,  
The lowlands and the mountain heights receive  
A glow of sunshine poured in streams of light,  
Just ere the prospect melted from thy sight?  
'Tis thus with human life; ere we expire,  
A momentary flash of living fire  
Lights up the eye, and bids a fond adieu,  
And then as sudden sinks beyond our view.

Thus RANDOLPH lay, too weak to raise a hand ;  
Yet now were heard, by those who near him stand,  
A groan, a whisper ; then, in words more plain,  
His life and actions they could hear him blame :  
“ Inhuman BUTLER ! — blood betrays thy plan,  
Contrived to sacrifice the noblest man  
That ever grasped my hand or crossed my door, —  
Yet I forgive thee — thou canst plot no more ;  
Thy deep deception and thy poison breath,  
Thy rival schemes, thank God, are closed by death  
I die detested, by myself condemned,  
That I for peace' sake could my honor blend  
With savage despots and the whelps of earth,  
And thus disfigure all my moral worth !  
Despised ! insulted ! poor, degraded worm !  
I look within, and then with loathing turn  
From what I am to what I might have been

In days more peaceful, and in such a scene !  
O God, forgive me ! — wilt thou not restore  
For IDA's sake one day, I ask no more ? —  
Redeem her friend ! — thy Mercy surely can,  
Alive or dead he is a guiltless man ! ”  
His features quiver'd, then his language fail'd,  
And weakness o'er his voice so fast prevail'd  
That soon no accent reach'd the stooping ear,  
And nought but muttering could the listener hear.

## V.

EDWARD and IDA near an aged tree,  
By chance, were seated, so that none could see  
Their shaded features, when the fight began,  
Yet they, with caution, could the conflict scan,  
Without the danger or the risk of life  
Incurr'd by those who rested near the strife ;

And there, we judge, they deem'd it wise to stay  
Till they could learn from friends who won the day ;  
What more at such an hour could MORTON do ?  
The slaves would claim him if but once in view,  
And this betrayal of the fatal source  
From whence rebellion looked for mental force,  
Would blast his prospects, all his friends ensnare,  
Nor wealth, nor family, could his fate repair.  
'Twas better far, in this, on hope to trust,  
And bear the sneers, perhaps the deep disgust  
Of those who fought, because he came not nigh  
Till all the feud had swept entirely by !  
When all was silent, when the foe had fled,  
And friends had gather'd or conceal'd the dead,  
He walked with IDA to her dreary home,  
Unconscious that his deeds by all were known,—  
That dying slaves had told, and others too,



Among the injured, that large numbers knew  
That EDWARD MORTON had, that very night,  
In secret council urged them all to fight!  
An ocean steamship half enwrapped in flame,  
An engine crashing guideless through a train,  
Are not more fearful than the wrath of man  
When 'gainst his life you dare devise a plan;  
And hence no language can by words disclose  
The storm of vengeance which at once arose  
Against that youth, when he among them stray'd  
And found himself by all the blacks betray'd!

## VI.

Of this disclosure IDA did not know,  
For she, the moment when she heard the foe  
Had slain her father, wildly sought the dead,  
And on his bosom cast her throbbing head,

And wept convulsive, till her strength gave way, —  
Till helpless on the corpse the living lay.  
Her female slaves, with eyes suffused with tears,  
Which show'd their love and all their anxious fears,  
Now raised her gently, and resistless bore  
Their nearly lifeless mistress from that floor.

## VII.

The morning dawns; and what a silence reigns!  
No dead are there, except RANDOLPH'S remains;  
The wounded foe, and all the guests are gone!  
And what a home! — whate'er you gaze upon  
Seems changed in aspect and all out of place!  
And of the conflict, — what a frightful trace!  
The slaves are busy, lifting things around,  
And jar of tables is the only sound  
Heard in the mansion all the lonely day,

Save when, with knives, they scraped the gore away.  
So deep the pang that fell on IDA's heart,  
Such poignant suffering the events impart,  
That she, unconscious, seem'd in swoon to lay,  
Without the strength, or wish, one word to say.  
Although a dream-like feeling cross'd her mind,  
So indistinct it could no utterance find,  
That EDWARD MORTON had been torn from her ;  
But that misfortune could to him occur ! —  
She did not, could not entertain the thought ;  
For one so noble, most assuredly, ought  
To pass unblemish'd every search of man,  
Though they his actions should unsparing scan.  
Thus waned the hours ; and when the sunset came,  
And her crush'd heart found some relief from pain,  
She feebly walk'd the porch with servants' aid,  
Each arm supported by a faithful maid.

Then they perceived approaching through the wood,  
A kind young neighbor, who well understood  
The warm attachment MORTON could but feel  
For this poor orphan ; and in friendship's zeal,  
He brought the tidings of that sad event,  
That EDWARD'S foes would not their course relent ;  
That proof against him was so startling, plain,  
That hope of pardon was absurdly vain ;  
That they intended, without loss of time,  
To fix a beam across from pine to pine,  
And when completed, hang the prisoner there,  
Despite the law, or interceding prayer !

### V III.

The thunder-cloud which gloom'd her mental sky,  
Now flash'd its lightning through her kindling eye,  
And shiver'd from her every servant near,

And o'er her visage, bursting bright and clear,  
The mental sun shone out, and courage came ;  
And stern resolve in high-born features flame !  
She walks erect, a proud, heroic maid,  
Sustained by thoughts that ask no servile aid,  
And ere her favorite horse in field was caught,  
And saddled firm, and, prancing, near her brought,  
She stood prepared, and mounts with graceful ease,  
And scarce the rein her hand had time to seize,  
Till voice and whip launch'd off the noble steed,  
Which bore her, bird-like, far beyond the mead.  
She reach'd the cottage ; and against the pine  
She saw a ladder in full length recline,  
And high, athwart the space, from tree to tree,  
A beam was fastened, and a rope hung free.  
A dozen idlers, — poor, misguided men,  
With five or six distinguished scarce from them

By better clothing and more decent air,  
Had this important part perform'd with care,  
And now were lounging all about the cot,  
Some playing cards, while some had liquor got,  
And all were merry and in boisterous glee  
When IDA RANDOLPH rode beneath the tree.  
Old BUTLER'S son was there, and had control,  
And seem'd, by one consent, the guiding soul,  
For what he wish'd was done, and what he said  
All sanctioned, too, by toss of hand or head.

## IX.

"Pray tell me, BUTLER, what all this doth mean!"

Said IDA, pointing to the gallows beam:

"Hast thou a prisoner, doom'd this day to die?"

I crave to see him! — canst thou this deny?"

"Ay! IDA RANDOLPH, by to-morrow's sun,

The deed of justice shall be surely done ;  
A dozen horsemen have gone far and near,  
To rouse the planters and invite them here  
By sunrise, or, at least, by six or eight,  
To witness with the rest his certain fate,  
And thou, with all the world, art welcome, too,  
And then the culprit thou canst closely view."

" BUTLER," said IDA, " I will ask once more,  
Remove the barricade which bars the door,  
And let me enter ! I desire to speak  
To him, ere you this groundless vengeance wreak ! "

" Why, that we need not do," the foe replied,  
" The felon may, through either wall, be spied,  
And talk'd, and whisper'd to, — and just as well  
As if enclosed with him in that old shell."  
She turn'd her horse along the cottage side,  
And stooping, through the logs the prisoner eyed,

So tensely fetter'd, that the hempen band  
Benumb'd and almost paralysed his hand ;  
And then address'd him : " EDWARD, lean thy head  
Against the open wall of this old shed,  
One word they grant us, if we thus will speak,  
If in this crevice thou canst press thy cheek."  
The youth complied ; her lip just touched his ear,  
She whisper'd low, yet this he could but hear :  
" To-night, O EDWARD ! — at the hour of ten,  
With arms to rescue ! I'll be here again ! "  
And then, out-speaking, in her usual tone,  
With steed more tightly rein'd to dash for home,  
She utter'd sad what seem'd a last adieu,  
Then touch'd her horse, and from the cot withdrew  
In rapid boundings far across the plain,  
And reach'd, as darkness closed, her own domain.



## X.

Now in the parlor IDA stands, and round,  
With mute obedience, and with gaze profound,  
Some thirty men intently watch her eye,  
And marvel who could her one wish deny.  
“My faithful slaves,” said she, “on you alone,  
My feeble person and this friendless home  
I cast ungarded, and implore your aid  
To hold secure from foes its honor’d shade.  
Young EDWARD MORTON, whom you love so well,  
And whose pure worth no youth can e’er excel,  
Without a doubt is doom’d too soon to die,  
If rescued not from those who round him lie!  
And who will rescue? who will risk his life?  
And hand to hand and breast to breast in strife  
Contend for EDWARD, and by force succeed,

And yield not to them, while there's one to bleed ?  
You answer, all ? " Yes, all ! " was shouted round,  
And gestures fierce proclaim'd that cheering sound  
No idle boasting, that would disappear  
When signs of vengeance show'd the foemen near !  
" Thank you, my brave men ! and now arm for fight,  
No time have we to lose in talk to-night ;  
On BROOKS, our foreman, I enjoin the care,  
The arms and horses instant to prepare,  
And when completed, join me at the door,  
By nine, not later, not one moment more."

## XI.

Her wish and order every man obey'd,  
And ere an hour the blacks, in full parade,  
Came marshalling forth, and prompt in columns form,  
And stand prepared the foemen's works to storm.

Then IDA mounted, and advised her men  
To move in silence through each grove and glen,  
And all to march in file, not as they stood,  
Till they had pass'd the outskirts of the wood.  
This order was preserved while on the plain,  
And not a whisper rose from that dark train,  
And not a sound, except the little made  
By crush of leaf or branch while in the shade.  
When they arrived at last so near the place,  
That, through the night, a practiced eye could trace  
A moving figure, or a sentinel nigh,  
If any stood between them and yon sky,  
They halted, and in silence wait the word  
To dash upon the foe the instant heard.  
As all was hushed around the cot and pine,  
And naught could now be seen but their outline,  
The maiden shudder'd, and supposed that they,

The foe and EDWARD, had gone far away.  
She stepp'd less noiseless, and walk'd up alone,  
And started to perceive, on block and stone  
The revellers lay, all wrapp'd in quiet sleep,—  
Their heavy breathing proved it calm and deep.  
'Twas plain to her that not an anxious thought  
Had cross'd their minds, that MORTON's friends, or aught  
Would e'er disturb them, or with vassals dare  
To rescue him, while closely cabin'd there.  
She stood perplexed! —how should she act towards  
    them?

An easy task, to march up all her men  
And strike them, sleeping, leaving none to tell  
From whom, or how the fatal death-shots fell.

## XII.

While undecided, near her, soft arose  
A gentle sound, which came not from her foes ;  
That knock, she thought, perchance was EDWARD'S call  
She stepp'd and listen'd near the cottage wall,  
And placed against it her attentive ear  
Just where the feeble noise came out most clear ;  
And then, what strange emotions thrill'd her heart,  
For MORTON whisper'd, and new plann'd her part.  
"Tell BROOKS," said he, "the ladder which our foe  
Against the pine had rear'd some hours ago,  
Now lies neglected by the cabin's side ;  
Let him climb it, and then the boards divide  
Which lie so loosely on this crumbling cot,  
And when he hath a partial opening got,  
He can descend within and loose my hand ;

Now go, and gently issue this command."

How anxious IDA watch'd, with hopes that pray,

The score of arm'd men who in slumber lay,

While her good servant up the ladder went

And soft, from log to log, in his descent

Crept down within the cabin to the floor,

That to them all he might the youth restore.

But just when MORTON rose to view, and came

With rapid step, and sudden touch'd the plain,

The bondsmen could no more their hearts restrain ;

With shouts of joy, and screams whose loudness thrill

They rush'd to greet him, and then all was still.

The sentinel sleeping on his post at night,

And sudden roused by flash of battle's light,

Starts not more terrified his foes to see

Than those that sound awaked beneath the tree.

They rise, and, stumbling, rush from side to side,

Awhile behind the cottage cringe to hide,  
And now for safety fly to woods most near,  
And howl for comfort as they disappear.  
The news was spread, by morning's earliest light,  
That twice five hundred slaves, concealed by night,  
Were moving East, and that the living blast  
Destroyed, disarmed, and burn'd whate'er it passed!  
That EDWARD MORTON had assumed command,  
That blacks, on all sides, so increased his band,  
They would outnumber soon, in foot and horse,  
The state militia in its greatest force!

## XIII.

When home, with IDA, EDWARD came once more,  
And enter'd, weary, its most welcome door,  
They found the vassals whom she left on guard  
So much alarm'd, they had each entrance barr'd.

They said that near them two of BUTLER'S gang,  
Or other ruffians, had on chargers sprang,  
And dash'd, like hunters, far across the plain,  
The moment that was heard the coming train.  
This news was fearful, and of course the door  
Was bolted strong, as it had been before,  
And blacks were station'd at the windows high,  
And order'd to report if foes drew nigh ;  
While MORTON plann'd some mode of self-defence,  
Or means to leave, should they a siege commence.  
What should be done this dark and dreary night ?  
Would it be wise in him to wait for light,  
When round the house, through all the forest green,  
By morning's dawn the foemen might be seen ?  
Within the parlor, dimly lighted now,  
For scarce would prudence one small lamp allow,  
They sat and listen'd, whispering each to each,



Lest spies without might hear a louder speech ;  
The sighing winds, the voice of leaves that stirr'd,  
The tramp of steeds, the lightest footstep heard,  
Induced the maiden oft to lift her eye,  
As though she ask'd if danger was not nigh.  
Thus pass'd the time, till in the outer hall,  
Divided from them by a massive wall,  
They heard a boring sound ! what can it be ?  
And then, like pistol shots, the clock struck three !  
“ That frightens me ! ” said IDA, glancing round,  
“ I ne'er before have heard that solemn sound  
Prolong'd by echoes in each distant room,  
It hath a voice prophetic of our doom ! ”

## XIV.

“ The dawn ! is it so near ? ” exclaimed the youth,  
Who scarce could deem that warning spoke the truth,

So earnest had they talked the future o'er,  
And there resolved on earth to part no more.  
They had arranged the course they would pursue,  
And of the slaves, detail'd a faithful few  
To bear the corpse, RANDOLPH'S remains, away  
Across the fields, by secret paths, ere day.  
When this procession left the house alone,  
And silence settled once more on that home,  
Two steeds conducted near the porch with care,  
Began to stamp, as if alarm'd while there.  
"IDA," said EDWARD, "now hath come the time,  
If ready, mount thy horse when I do mine,  
And follow speechless till we pass the wood,  
We may, with caution, all their guards elude."  
They deemed it prudent to avoid the road  
On which the bondsmen bore their cover'd load,  
And turn'd their horses from the path, around

A field whose verdure echo'd back no sound.  
And thus in stillness they pursued their way,  
And unmolested, though perhaps there lay  
A band so near them, that a careless word  
By either utter'd, might have then been heard.

## XV.

They reached the graveyard just as in the sky  
The fragment of a moon rose on the eye  
Beyond a cloud, whose verge the rays adorn,  
While its far base, in glow, gave signs of morn.  
Unwelcome dawn! The corpse, without a word,  
Though tears were shed, was in the earth interr'd  
So fast, yet noiseless, that the stars of night  
Still look'd on them when it had pass'd from sight.  
But this, though hurried, was alas too late,  
For arm'd and mounted, watching near the gate,

Four men were posted, eager to receive  
The youth the moment he essay'd to leave.  
This MORTON saw, and quickly form'd his plan,  
And caution'd IDA that they should not scan  
That ruffian host with too intent a glance  
While moving from them, lest it might, perchance,  
Excite suspicion, and provoke a call  
Before their steeds could spring the graveyard wall.  
"Now ride," said he, "right towards the northern end,  
And slowly move, as if we both intend  
To turn again when we have seen some grave,  
And do not mean by this our lives to save.  
And mark, remember, when we reach yon side,  
Although a hazard, still it must be tried,  
The steeds must leap the wall and clear the ditch,  
And if they falter, do not spare the switch!"  
While speaking thus, they gently moved away,

And bid the slaves in quietude to stay,  
As if they waited anxious their return,  
And further orders only paused to learn.  
They had proceeded half across the lot  
Before this scheme was guess'd ; and then a shot  
From gun or pistol whistled past their head,  
And 'gainst a tombstone near impinged its lead.  
No word was needed now to rouse their speed,  
The ruffian's shout, the tramp of coming steed,  
Sent IDA forward on her matchless horse  
So fast and furious that the crashing force  
Bore down before it bush and brier and tree,  
As if he spurn'd each fence that cross'd the lea.  
When EDWARD with an effort gain'd her side,  
He felt his bosom swell with manly pride,  
For not a feature show'd one shade of fear,  
But beam'd on him a glance that could but cheer.

But where are those, that band of desperate men,  
Who follow'd for awhile, and fired on them,  
As o'er the wall they disappear'd from view,  
Despite their shouts, and all their shots could do?  
They are not idle; up the public way,  
And urging all they meet to join the fray,  
They lash their steeds, and keep a watchful eye  
On clouds of dust awaked by those who fly.  
The planters, gazing on the strange uproar,  
Fling up the windows, or from open door  
Shout after them, and ask to know the why  
A youth and maiden rush'd so madly by.  
No answer is return'd, but wave of hand  
Implores the gazer fast to aid the band;  
And this short summons brings out many a youth  
On active steed, resolved to learn the truth.  
And now for miles along each winding road,

From spacious mansion, and from mean abode,  
Men may be seen all day to join the chase,  
And strain their eyes to catch the faintest trace  
Of those whom distance so concealed from view  
That naught but dust betray'd the course they flew!

## XVI.

The sun at noon pour'd down his scorching beam,  
The tired horse went staggering towards the stream,  
The shaded banks invite his limbs to rest,  
Yet still, by madmen, onward—onward prest,  
Though trembling, as the hill checks his career,  
He falters not, and fast impell'd by fear,  
With mighty effort gallops weary on,  
Till in the West twilight is nearly gone.  
They pause at last upon a rising ground,  
And gaze with discontent on all sides round,

As if interrogating all they saw,  
And of the traitor, would some answer draw.  
A stranger seated underneath a tree,  
Confess'd when question'd, those they wish'd to see  
Had pass'd that way, perchance an hour before,  
On steeds so tired they scarce could travel more;  
And then he saw them ride beyond the hill,  
And then return, as if by change of will,  
And enter that large house they saw in view,  
And this, upon his oath, he said was true.  
A sudden joy flash'd out from every eye,  
To hear that MORTON was at last so nigh,  
That if with caution they approach'd the door,  
He could upon his steed escape no more.  
The boisterous mirth awaken'd by this news  
Appear'd, though doubtful, even to infuse  
A better spirit in each sinking jade,



For now the lashings faster progress made.  
They reach'd the dwelling, and all rush'd to see  
If in the stable it could surely be  
The horses of RANDOLPH that fill'd the air  
With smoke-like vapors which arose from there.  
When thus convinced, beyond all chance of doubt,  
That by good fortune they had traced them out,  
Their savage feelings were at once express'd  
By hearty gestures which almost caress'd.

## XVII.

The house was enter'd, while the windows round,  
From which, by jumping, aught could reach the ground,  
Were closely watch'd by two arm'd men at each,  
Whose eager hopes were shown by whisper'd speech.  
The host received them with that calm surprise  
A dog bestows, with half averted eyes,

On strange intruders when they cross the door,  
And uninvited dare to tread the floor.

“We come,” said BUTLER, “to arrest and hang  
The youth, who, with a lady, lately sprang  
From yonder horses, and then enter’d here,  
A *fact* which we by *proof* can make appear!”  
“Why! that’s my only son and his young wife!”  
Exclaimed the host, “and *you* demand his life!  
It is impossible!—they cannot be  
The man and maiden whom you wish to see!  
Because I know them,—and can truly say  
That youth, from childhood to the present day,  
By word or deed, ne’er gave me cause to blush,  
Or by his manners waked the slightest flush!”  
“That trait,” said BUTLER, “proves he is the one,  
For never lived, ’tis said, a nobler son  
Than that young MORTON, till fanatic zeal

Produced a madness fatal to his weal !”

“ And yet,” the host replied, “ ’tis not the same.

Though I acknowledge, Morton is our name,

And will confess that like your foe, we feel

For men in bondage that fanatic zeal

Which you are pleased to think will make men mad,

If they before, an angel’s goodness had ;

But this conviction may be traced to birth,

As old Vermont contains our native earth.”

“ And that confession,” BUTLER quickly said,

“ Confirms suspicion,—and the why, you dread

To call your son, who is, too well you know,

The one whose deeds have made the South his foe !”

Within the room that instant stepp’d the youth,

Whose looks so near proclaim’d the surmise truth,

That BUTLER grasp’d his pistol ! then as quick

Replaced the weapon, and in voice so thick

It almost choked him, he inquired the way  
He came by steeds which EDWARD rode that day.  
The son replied: "This eve, while near yon mill,  
Descending towards the base of this steep hill,  
We saw a youth and lady urging fast  
Their steeds, as if to reach, while day should last,  
Some place of shelter from the coming night,  
For even then the sun was scarce in sight.  
We met them, and confiding, talk'd awhile,  
Then *wish'd* that fortune might upon them smile,  
So we consented that the steeds we rode  
Should be exchanged, because, to our abode  
Their tired horses could, of course, proceed,  
While ours, all fresh, would bear them off with speed.  
How glad I am they have escaped so well,  
And if conjecture can the distance tell,  
They are by this time twenty miles from here,  
And by the dawn their foes they need not fear."

## XVIII.

Near Columbia,—Susquehanna's pride,  
Where crystal waters wash a mountain side,  
Checquesalongo rears his giant crest,  
While close beneath his brow, which fronts the West,  
A stately mansion sleeps among the shade,  
So deep embower'd no eastern storms invade.  
'Twas here the wanderers, if report be true,  
A shelter found, and just that welcome, too,  
Which cheers the heart, and clears the mind of care,  
And all its comforts begs the guest to share.  
And here they met, by chance, an old divine;  
Invited, opportunely, there to dine,  
Who soon consented, when the feast was done,  
To make two hearts, in Scripture phrase, but one.



IN MEMORY OF  
WILLIAM S. FRIST.

A YOUNG LAWYER OF STERLING MERIT AND ABILITY.

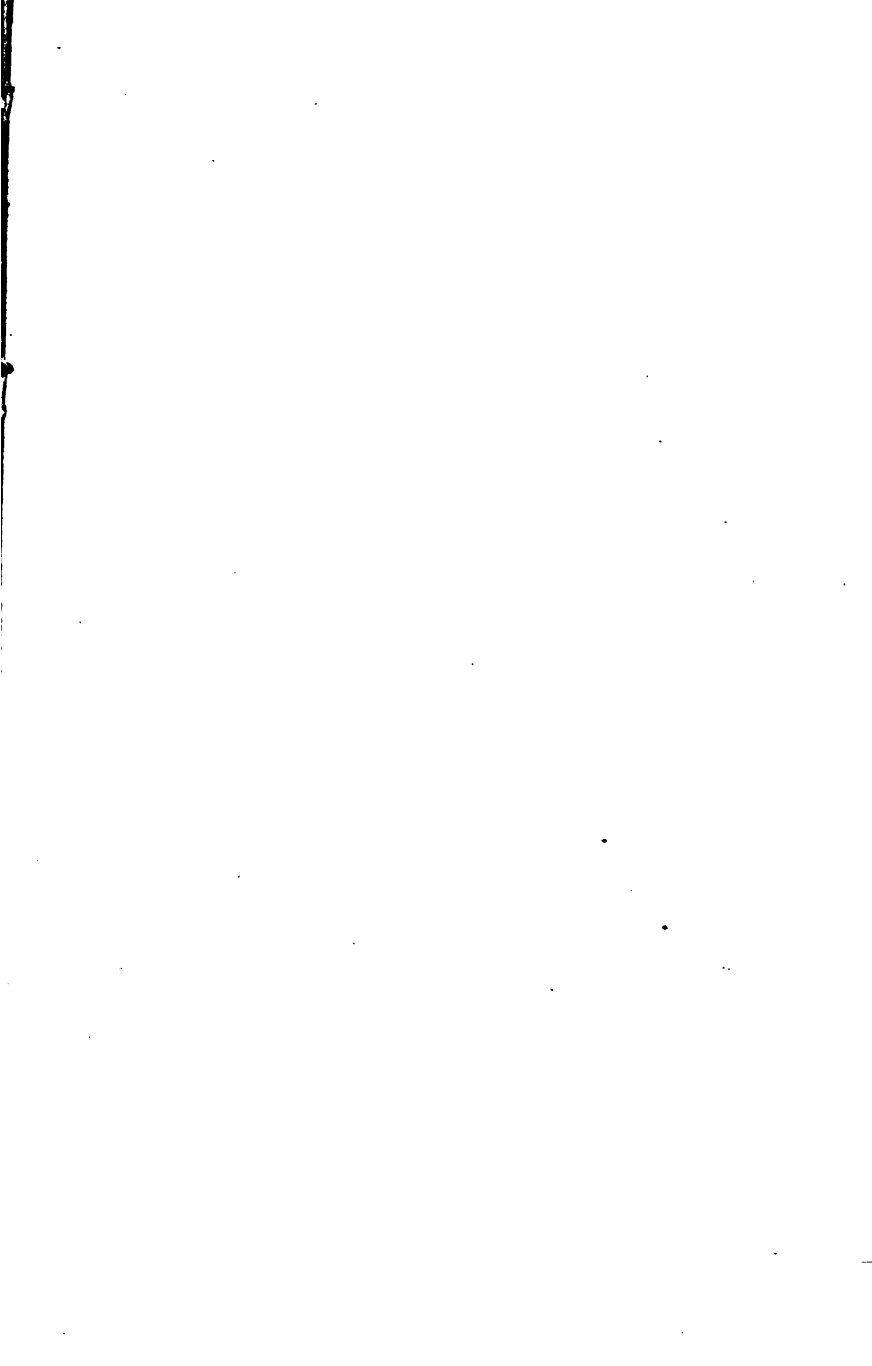
THE eighth of November, seventy-one,  
There fell to the floor a talented son ;  
But not a burn, nor a powdery stain  
Where the cold lead entered that youthful brain  
Could be seen by the Surgeon's searching eye  
To prove the flash of the weapon was nigh.  
But inspired words from an angel band  
Declared that he fell by a Rival's hand ;  
For they were all there that eventful night,  
When his spirit took its heavenward flight.  
They whisper, Though ages may roll away,  
There is one who cannot forget that day,  
Through all the future he shall remember  
That *blood-stained* night, the eighth of November !

ADVICE TO A DEAR FRIEND IN HER  
EIGHTEENTH YEAR.

FLORENCE, dear Florence, sweetest rose of thy  
home,

Leave men of low station severely alone ;  
For there will come one so portly in measure,  
And mental endowment and worldly treasure,  
He will please thy mind, and delight thy mother,  
And seem in deportment more dear than a brother ;  
Then give him the love of thy noble young heart,  
And he will pray nightly you never may part !







THE  
FATE OF MARCEL.

BY  
CALEB HARLAN, M.D.,  
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE,  
AUTHOR OF "ELFLORA OF THE SUSQUEHANNA," ETC., ETC., ETC.

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## PREFACE.

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IN 1836 I returned to Milltown, Mill Creek Hundred, where I was born, and the following year settled down to practise medicine at the Brandywine Springs, within a mile and a half of my birthplace.

Was this a wise movement? How could I expect to receive the patronage of my neighbors? Did not every farmer around me know that only a few years before I was a school-boy among them? And what was the result? I very soon learned the truth of the wise declaration of Christ, that "A prophet hath no honor in his own country."

Well, as I had but little to do in my profession for a year or two, I had ample time to read and write, and having a passion for literature I wrote "Elflora of the Susquehanna." Then, for the entertainment of my friends, as soon as the last page was written I loaned the manuscript to my associates who had come from Philadelphia to spend the summer in the neighborhood of the Springs. They all professed to be very much

pleased with the poem. But nearly every one was solicitous to know the fate of Marcel. This was all the encouragement I needed to write all I knew about him.

To make the narrative as interesting as possible it was written in the form of a novel. And to keep some of the characters from being known I gave them fictitious names. But that was more than forty years ago. If written now, such discretion would not be required by either prudence or friendship.

# THE FATE OF MARCEL.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE scene of the following narrative is laid in the north of Delaware, where wooded hills, secluded valleys, and streams of crystal water ever lend a coolness to the summer air and a dreamy music to the silent hour.

In years not long past this region was a wilderness, and the winds of heaven swept onward from forest to forest, and scarcely touched the shaded earth, where now may be seen the laborer on the plain, the idler in every grove, and the favorite of fortune in his luxurious carriage winding the opened vales, a prominent figure in the beautiful landscape around him. But even then, when every log cabin was in the woods and every hunter of the deer returned loaded with venison, an ample space had been cleared on the banks of the Red Clay, and a commodious dwelling cast its broad shadow in the evening sun upon a steep declivity, which extended from the house to the stream. The appearance of the mansion, and the exquisite taste displayed in the arrangement of flowers and shrubbery and the selection of trees to adorn the scene, gave abundant proof that

the owner was a man of wealth, and also a strong probability that he was assisted in his delightful task by the gentle counsel and the holy love of woman.

One afternoon in the month of August a gay and portly youth was seen advancing towards the dwelling. His measured tread and upright carriage, and the frequent glances at his fine person, showed a more than common anxiety to make a favorable impression upon the bright circle he was soon to meet. He had scarcely entered the house when the mingled voices of several ladies gently reproved him for the lateness of his visit.

"That can easily be amended," said he, evidently pleased by the liveliness of his reception.

"How can it?" demanded Cora.

"By remaining an hour longer in the evening," said the youth.

"Mr. Fisher," rejoined Cora, laughing pleasantly, "do not misunderstand us; 'tis not your very agreeable company that is in so much demand at present, but your services. We promised our city cousins, Matilda and Constance, a view of Harrie Clifton's cottage this afternoon. You are probably well aware that our dear brother, Fitzwalter, has a singular dislike to rowing a boat. But he assures us that you would be very much gratified to pull us up the dam."

"Lake! lake!" exclaimed two or three ladies at once.

"Certainly," said Cora, amused, and smiling at the sensitiveness of her sisters. "How thoughtless in me to call that beautiful sheet of water by such a vulgar name!"

"With the greatest pleasure I accept the office as-



signed me," said Fisher; "and I hope your brother, Mr. Irving, will make one of the party."

"I think he will not," returned the lady; "he is so tired of hearing our conjectures about Harrie Clifton, that we need not expect him."

"Why," said Constance, in surprise, "he told me all about him the other evening, just after we arrived from the city."

"He told you *all*!" exclaimed Fisher, emphasizing the last word; "and may I inquire what he did tell you?"

"Well," rejoined the lady, "he said he knew nothing about the—except——"

"Very satisfactory," said the young man, smiling. "When your visit is ended and you return home, no doubt but the narration of his history will interest your friends."

"And what do you know more than he told me?" retorted the lady, somewhat flurried by his remark.

"There is the whole beauty of it," said Fisher; "his history, as far as we know, may be written on your finger-nail with a *lead-pencil*."

The conversation was interrupted by Blanche Irving urging an immediate preparation for the excursion. While the ladies were thus engaged, Francis Fisher stepped on the portico to enjoy the prospect around the dwelling.

A deep valley expanded before him, winding away in beautiful curves towards the south, its bordering hills and woods strongly pictured in blue haze, which darkened to a twilight gloom as it mantled the far undulating horizon. Immediately in front and on the

left towered a majestic forest, whose dense foliage lay sleeping and undisturbed in the milder sunlights of the declining summer. The warbling of the stream in the deep valley could not be heard, but the sparkling of its broken surface told that it was filling the air with the soft and low music of agitated waters. The contemplation of this beautiful landscape was interrupted by the ladies, who now joined him at the door.

While wandering obliquely along the hill-side, the conversation naturally turned to the mysterious recluse whose little cabin they were about to examine, though only from a distance.

"Will you please to tell me," said Matilda, as she accepted the offered arm of Fisher, "all you know concerning Clifton?"

"Certainly I will, with pleasure," rejoined Francis; "but I know so little that I might almost say I know nothing. Several months ago I was clambering among the rugged cliffs of an old wood above this some distance, when I observed a young man half reclining on a thickly-shaded rock. In his hand he held a book, but was not reading: his forefinger was inserted between the leaves, as though he had just closed the volume. Judging from his look, it seemed evident that he was engaged in deep reflection. I passed him, watching the while, with a vague hope that I might catch his eye, but he appeared no way disturbed; did not so much as glance at me; if so, I could not see it or I should have spoken. I continued on my walk and thought but little of the circumstance, until again and again I met the individual, and found him still the same, apparently careless of every passing object."

"How singular! And you really know where he lives?"

"Yes; we ascertained that he lives in a secluded cottage on the banks of the Red Clay, and that his name is Harrie Clifton; but that it is his real name I cannot be certain."

"Well, is there nothing more?" inquired Matilda.

"Nothing. That is all I know; save that I still could meet him in the deep recesses of yon old wood."

Fisher felt a slight tremor in the delicate arm of Matilda Seymour as he concluded the sentence. But what was the cause of it? Who can read the secret emotions of the human heart? Was it the result of fear? What other feeling could she possibly entertain?

By this time the whole party had arrived at the mooring of the "Imogene," an appellation given to the little bark by the bright-eyed Cora. Here a strong barrier had been thrown across the stream, forming a narrow lake, which extended to the north, between wooded hills and dark and almost impenetrable groves. Near the boat several large trees spread their branches over the beautiful expanse of water, which lay calm and unruffled, with shade and sunlight mingling, as they rested on its green bosom.

Native willows crowded their strong roots along the margin of the liquid element, forming a compact and solid footing, which was carpeted by a soft and tender verdure. Here the party easily entered the little skiff, and were soon gliding up the placid current.

"What a beautiful lake!" exclaimed Matilda. "How long has it been here?"

"Not many years, I presume," said Fisher. "The

lake was made when the mill was built. The stream itself, no doubt, has been here forty or fifty thousand years, as there is nothing on the earth more permanent than streams of water. Rocks and mountains may be removed by man, but rivers cannot be. They may be changed in their course, yet onward, *onward* they will flow forever, till the hills and valleys through which they roll are washed into the sea."

"Forty thousand years!" said Constance, with a frown of incredulity.

"Yes, and more," rejoined Fisher. "Have not many rivers written their history upon the earth? How many years has the Mississippi been forming its vast delta in the Gulf of Mexico?"

"Why, certainly not over six thousand years," replied Constance.

"There you are greatly mistaken," rejoined Fisher. "It has printed on its own page that not less than thirty-five or forty thousand years it has been depositing new soil in the Gulf. And how long has the Falls of Niagara been travelling from Lake Ontario up to its present position? Not less, I assure you, my good friend, than forty or fifty thousand years."

"All nonsense,—all infidelity!" cried Constance.

"You are too positive in your objections," said Fisher. "You will certainly acknowledge that the river Nile has been, during the last sixty thousand years, making rich farm-lands in lower Egypt?"

"I will acknowledge no such nonsense; no such infidelity to ancient history!" replied Constance.

"Will we not soon be aground?" said Blanche, observing the increasing shallowness of the water. But

the words were scarcely uttered ere the "Imogene" grated along the sand.

"Now, ladies," exclaimed Fisher, "yonder is Clifton's cottage; you see it up the stream on the east bank, nearly concealed by laurels and the clustering branches of a few large trees."

"I see a huge rock or cliff covered with moss and wild vines," said Constance. "Is the cottage near it?"

"That is the cottage itself," exclaimed Cora. "I know its appearance, but had no idea that we could see it from here; it always seemed so perfectly secluded."

"That can easily be explained," replied the youth: "the stiff breeze which is now sweeping up the lake has lifted the drooping boughs with their dense foliage, and thus partly revealed the dwelling; in a perfect calm you could not detect even a faint outline of it. See, the wind lulls, and it is even now, momentarily, hid from view."

The boat, no longer held by the oar against the strong flow of water, began to drift slowly down the stream.

"There is something," said Matilda, as she glanced her eye over the towering and extensive forests that covered all the hills around them, "very singular and, I think, rather suspicious in such a seclusion."

"Why suspicious?" inquired Cora. "Certainly an individual may live retired if agreeable."

"Yes, my dear friend, that is the very word," rejoined the other,— "if agreeable. But it is unnatural, and therefore cannot be agreeable, unless some powerful circumstance has driven him from society. In that

case I admit it may be more pleasant to avoid than to mingle with his fellow-men."

"Very true," replied Cora; "but trifles always have had, and always will have, an influence upon human actions. And in this particular case it may have been the merest freak of a romantic fancy which induced him to become a recluse."

"Trifles!" exclaimed Matilda. "Who ever heard of trifles inducing a man to relinquish all the pleasures of society, all the luxuries of social life, or even the light frivolities of the busy world? My dear Cora, it was something more than a trifle which induced that mysterious person to secrete himself like a felon from the public gaze. Were he an old or frightful-looking being, I could easily suppose that the unkindness or neglect of others drove him here; but nothing of this nature can apply to Harrie Clifton. To confess my own conviction, I can think of no cause sufficient to estrange him from the world but the committal of some crime."

"What a conclusion!" exclaimed Cora. "Why, he may be the victim of disappointed love."

"I beg your pardon, my dear, for differing with you," replied Matilda; "but I do not believe one word of it. Unrequited love may drive a man into dissipation or into retirement for a while, but not into solitude for years. However, if he is not concealing himself to escape punishment, then of course he has some great object in view, for no person would take the trouble or suffer the inconvenience to live in that cottage unless actuated by some powerful motive. Mr. Fisher, you have often met him?"

"Often."

"How does he appear to be occupied when you meet?"

"Generally reading when seated, and when walking apparently always engaged in deep meditation."

"I noticed that myself," returned Cora. "Several times I passed him in the woods, and I never saw a countenance more indicative of profound and habitual thought."

"Were you not afraid to encounter him alone?" exclaimed Constance.

"Not at all. There is nothing repulsive in his features. Indeed, I often felt that his presence in the same forest was a protection against any unexpected danger."

"Well!" exclaimed Matilda. "I am astounded! Place implicit confidence in an entire stranger! What a miracle! If I were Mr. Irving he should either define his position or leave this valley and abandon this forest without a moment's delay."

"Probably he has no secret, or no eventful history to reveal," replied Cora, laughing.

"Ah, my dear Cora," said Matilda, "he may be a villain in disguise. Never, never should you wander here alone!"

"Matilda," said Blanche, in astonishment, "would you have us so much the victims of fear or a false prudence as to confine our rambles to the garden? I mean, of course, when unattended by gentlemen."

"Certainly I would," said the Beauty. "We never think of walking even the streets at night without the company of a gentleman. And see how gloomy, how lonesome, this forest looks."

"What a horrible captivity!" exclaimed Blanche.

"Only ramble here when attended by others! I will never submit to that restraint."

"Have we not already entire confidence in him?" said Cora.

"That is the most alarming feature in the whole stratagem," replied Matilda, energetically; "that confidence may be the work of design on his part. Therefore do not expose yourselves when you can remedy the evil."

"What course would you adopt?" inquired Cora.

"What course, my dear Cora! Why, that must be plain to every one. Expel the intruder! or make him prove to you that his character is above reproach, is perfectly respectable. He could not—nay, if a *gentleman*, he would not—blame you."

"Well done," replied Cora, in a thoughtful manner and more serious air. "We may be more watchful, but we cannot forego the pleasure of wandering alone in these forests. But you will have nothing to fear, Matilda. Mr. Fisher we know will be happy to attend you in all your rambles."

"Thank you. He might be much better employed in finding out the real standing of this intruder. For your sake, my dear friends, for I do not apprehend any danger to myself or Constance during the short time we propose to remain with you."

"If you will admit," said Blanche Irving, with an inquisitive smile, "that your curiosity would be very much gratified by the result, I will get Fitzwalter to engage in it too."

"That expression implies a doubt of my affection for you."



"Not at all, Matilda; but two motives are better than one."

"Very well, have it as you please, my dear Blanche. Free yourselves from all danger, and I promise to be very well satisfied with whatever construction you may place upon it."

"Now, Mr. Fisher," said Blanche, smiling pleasantly, as she thought of the amusing or interesting time they might have in the "pursuit after knowledge," "you have heard the conspiracy against our strange and mysterious recluse, and we must look to you to carry it out. He must either give a good account of himself or must travel to parts unknown. Is that it, Matilda?"

"Precisely so," said the Beauty.

"I will endeavor," said Francis, "to make his acquaintance, and with your permission will offer to introduce him to the family."

"First you should become well acquainted," replied Blanche, "and then if you think that he would be an interesting and *suitable* associate, with brother's permission, we *probably* will not object to the introduction."

"Ah, that is the language I like to hear!" exclaimed Matilda. "But how passing strange it is that you who can be so very prudent in the choice of company can be so careless in your rambles through pathless woods!"

"Matilda, when we lived in the city we were just as timid in our transient visits to the country as you are now. But habit hath changed our nature. We no longer look upon the dark and unfrequented grove as

a lonely place. We see the birds and the flowers, and the little toiling insects, with feelings that make them social friends. But you are so accustomed to associate only with your fellow-beings that you feel no fellowship with the speechless world around you."

During this conversation, and more which we have not space to record, the little party was moving homeward. The ladies, when they entered the dwelling, scattered themselves over the house to prepare for the entertainment of the evening. All but Blanche Irving; she bounded to where Fitzwalter was busily reading and enjoying his cigar after his own invigorating and solitary ramble.

"My dear brother," she exclaimed, pressing a kiss upon his forehead, "Francis Fisher is going to investigate the whole mystery about Harrie Clifton."

"Nonsense!" said Fitzwalter, without lifting his eye from the paper.

"But listen, my dear brother: Matilda thinks it really dangerous to have a suspicious person living and wandering about the woods which we so often frequent alone."

"Ridiculous!" said the brother, in a slow and measured tone, as he carefully knocked the ashes from that fascinating weed with his little finger.

The sister's warmth of manner being somewhat cooled by these laconic replies, she was about to leave, but turning once more, she said,—

"Will my dear brother assist in the investigation?"

"Will my dear brother wait till to-morrow morning for supper to be ordered on the table?" replied

Fitzwalter, nicely imitating the soft tones of a lady's voice.

This gentle hint that more important matters required immediate attention broke up the conversation.

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## CHAPTER II.

WHEN the light of the next morn came slowly and beautifully over the earth, with sparkling dew, balmy air, and the solemn notes of the summer bird, few were the beings to be seen, and slight was the noise to be heard about the glen-mansion.

At last a delicate form, with glossy ringlets drooping in billows about her unrobed neck, appeared at one of the upper windows, gazing with rapture upon the freshened scene, as she folded a rich shawl around her unattired person. Suddenly she stepped back, and, blushing to a deep crimson, exclaimed,—

“Francis Fisher! and off so early! What can be the matter? How fast he walks! And never casts a single glance in this direction. ‘Out of sight out of mind,’ I suppose. Has entirely forgotten the impression we made upon him. Very well, young man, go on thy way rejoicing. Ah! I remember now; he is going to look for Harrie Clifton, and this, I presume, is the best time to find him by that sweet lake. What a blessed morn! So fresh, so clear, so bright. How much enjoyment we lose in slumber! Some day we

must rise before the sun, and in the little boat drift with the current on those glassy waters."

We will now leave the Beauty and follow the individual whom she recognized in the distance.

It was Francis Fisher, going, as she conjectured, to obtain, if possible, an interview with the unknown recluse. He continued along the west bank of the Red Clay till he came to a steep rocky hill which rises so abruptly from the lake that you find it more convenient to ascend it as you advance.

Here, as he expected, he saw the tall and graceful outline, the commanding figure, and the noble bearing of the stranger. His pale and expansive forehead was gently bowed as he leaned in a thoughtful manner against one of the many trees around him. There was something in his appearance that repelled by a strange and undefined dignity the inquisitive mind of Fisher.

"Good-morning," said the youth as he approached nearer. The salutation was only returned by a slight bow, and it was evident from the composure of the countenance that the train of reflection was not broken by the mere mechanical nod of the recluse.

"Harrie Clifton (if that is your name), I presume from your coolness that I disturb your meditations. I sincerely beg pardon for this intrusion. Will you permit me to lay before you the cause of my presence here this morning? I await your answer. You turn your face from me. Am I to understand by this that you decline to have any intercourse with me?"

A second time the recluse bowed his head, but the gesture was so slight that Fisher could scarcely perceive it.

"Sir, I will not be repulsed from doing my duty by this haughty manner. I come here to inform you that your presence in this forest is repugnant to the feelings of ladies who live near, and whose pleasure it is to ramble alone in these woods."

"I can leave if they request it," said Harrie, straightening himself up to his full height and fixing for the first time a keen and penetrating glance upon Fisher.

"I hope there will be no necessity. They do not wish to disturb you provided you can satisfy them that you are an honorable man."

"They have no cause to think otherwise," replied Clifton.

"They have, sir. Are you not an intruder upon the private domain of Mr. Irving?"

"Does he say so?" demanded Clifton.

"No; but the ladies regard your presence here as a positive intrusion upon their rights."

"It would have been charitable to let me know it sooner."

"They did not suspect you to be governed by any unworthy motive till lately."

"Ay, they did not! They are very kind indeed! And what has aroused their suspicions?"

"Their mistrust was first awakened by Matilda Seymour."

"Matilda Seymour! And who is Matilda Seymour?" said Harrie, bowing his head very low and speaking in a manner rather disrespectful.

"Sir, Matilda is a lady who has just arrived from the city. She is positively the most beautiful creature that ever lived,—a floating glory! Perfection dwells within

her. As a proof of this I need only mention that among her intimate associates she is familiarly called the 'Beauty,' and this meed is accorded to her without envy on the part of others, because she is so amiable that all love and cherish her with unspeakable affection."

This eulogy was received by Clifton with a broad smile of incredulity, and it was several moments before he replied:

"I cannot call you a knave or a fool, for that would be uncivil; but I must say that you speak more like a moon-struck lover than a man of good sober sense."

"Very well, Harrie Clifton; I can forgive you, because you have not seen her. Should you ever behold her, you will cheerfully acknowledge that my description of her entirely fails to do justice to her appearance or to the qualities of her mind."

"Splendid moral qualities," returned Clifton, "when she can induce others to persecute an entire stranger! Why does she wish to drive me from these woods? Why interfere with my pursuits? Why manifest such a mean curiosity to know my history? Are these the attributes of a perfect lady?"

"My dear sir, you entirely misunderstand her motive. She is actuated by a feeling of prudence and a refined, lady-like sagacity. There is not one spark of unkindness in her whole nature."

"Her benevolence certainly has a very limited range when she cannot be satisfied without expelling me from a home most deeply cherished for its seclusion and retirement."

"She does not wish to do it, Harrie. I tell you

again and again that personal protection and a very exalted sense of propriety cause her to exercise great watchfulness in her intercourse with the world. The most vague suspicion that you may be a degraded and dangerous being is enough to arouse all her sensibilities."

"Well, if it must be so," said Clifton, as he drew a deep sigh and cast his eye around him, "the sooner I leave the better."

"No, Clifton, no; it is not necessary that you should leave this place. Only prove to me that you are a real trustworthy man, and, if descended from a respectable family, I think I can obtain permission even to introduce you to the ladies at Mr. Irving's."

"When I cannot be happy without society," rejoined Clifton, "I may comply with your request."

"But you would not leave us, and let the impression remain that you are an outcast?"

"Certainly."

"Why, you manifest a very strange insensibility to the opinions of others!"

"My conscience has nothing to fear."

"You are mistaken, Clifton. You may lose the world's regard even when most merited. Come, now, confess to me your sins, if you have any, and tell me who you are, what brought you here, and why you prefer to remain in such cheerless seclusion. Will you make no effort, no disclosure to obtain the esteem and acquaintance of the ladies at the glen-mansion?"

"Their esteem I have not forfeited," said Clifton, "as it appears I never had it. Their acquaintance I leave to those who can enjoy it."

"I do most sincerely wish," replied Fisher, "that I could induce you to take a different view of this matter. I think you are a very unhappy being. I think so because you appear to have no friends,—no one to talk with you,—and, above all, no female society. I think in this life you have missed the true path to happiness. Let me place this idea in a still stronger light. I once had an old uncle who was reputed to be one of the wisest men of his age. Many a time he has called me to him and said, 'Now, Frank, let me tell you how to be happy. There are two periods in the life of every man, provided he sails his bark with judgment, which are blessed with unclouded happiness. The first is when his imagination adorns and beautifies the whole visible world around him, and he sees in every pretty girl an angel of light and life and love. The second is that time when, after years of toil and industry and prudent forethought, he has amassed a sum of money sufficient for all his wants and he sees clustering about him like sweet flowers a growing and cheerful family, two or three of them just budding and blossoming into the richest charms of womanhood. Then it is that bright ones like his own come thronging in, and music and laugh and song bring back the joys, the freshness, and the innocent pleasures of his early days.' Now, Clifton," continued Fisher, "there is the voice of wisdom, and what provision are you making to mould your coming years into a peaceful future? Do you expect to find among your musty books that comfort which can only flow from the real realities of life,—a happy family and a sweet communion with your fellow-beings? What I have told you has been breathed into



my ear a hundred times that I might not forget it, for he was convinced by trial of its truth. Now let me beg you to contrast this picture with the unnatural career which you have chosen to follow in this dreary solitude. It is impossible for you to be happy if you do not change your course of life. Why not permit me to become acquainted with you for your own sake, and once more enter refined and entertaining society, provided you are worthy of it?"

"My books are my companions. I want no others," replied Clifton, as he turned to leave the woods.

"One moment more," exclaimed Fisher. "I beg your pardon for asking so often. Do tell me who you are? What is your real name? Where did you come from? Where were you born? Who is acquainted with you? Do you know any person about or near this? Do let me know something about you. Do you intend to leave very soon? When can I see you again?"

"Farewell," said Harrie, waving his hand; "farewell," and as he concluded the valediction, walked leisurely away, and was soon by the edge of the stream among the dense undergrowth of the forest. Here he paused, and, placing a couple of fingers in his mouth, awakened a shrill and peculiar whistle. A small canoe immediately glided from under the bushes, propelled by a little copper-colored negro. In this light skiff the recluse ascended the lake to its northern end, and was soon landed in the opposite wood; and then proceeded directly to his cottage, followed by the boy in respectful silence.

We will endeavor to give a description of the place

and appearance of his abode. It stood near and parallel with the shore, on a steep bank of some twenty or thirty feet elevation above the water. The Red Clay, or the Kimensi, as it is called by the Indians, after wandering in a serpentine channel through a broad expanse of wild meadow, turns to the east and rushes against the cottage precipice. Then as suddenly changing its course, it glides to the south, forming a right angle in the stream immediately beneath the dwelling. Then flowing on with a rippling and broken surface over beds of rock and pebble, enters the lake but a short distance below the cabin.

There was evidently some design in the selection of this location. For, although his own light and buoyant canoe could easily and at all times be propelled up the rapids and concealed in a little inlet along the wooded brow of the hill, the heavy and larger boat, which he saw resting upon the lake when he selected his retreat, could not be floated up within eye- or ear-shot of his secluded home. Hence he expected to avoid the inquisitive gaze of those, whoever they might be, who kept a barge of pleasure upon that unfrequented water. The building will require but a passing notice. It had but one door, which opened to the south; a large window to the west, and one to the north. The interior was smoothly plastered and colored to a light green. A well-selected library, consisting of the most valuable works of ancient and modern times, occupied shelves which were neatly arranged on your right and in front as you entered the dwelling. Against the northern wall, over the fireplace, hung a large, old-fashioned mirror, and near it two small but well-executed paintings.

Under the west window stood a softly-cushioned settee, and over it were shelves strewn with minerals. In the middle of the room was a large, covered table with books, papers, manuscripts, and old pens promiscuously scattered over it, with an arm-chair on one side and a rocking-chair on the other. This apartment, the only one in the dwelling, was large and had an air of real comfort and deep seclusion.

Clifton walked the floor, revolving in his mind the unpleasant position in which the caprice or curiosity of others had placed him.

"Shelly," said he, still continuing his pace in a slow and thoughtful mood.

"Sir."

"A storm is brewing."

"No, massa; sky clear,—stones dry,—wind tried to blow me down 'e lake."

"We must leave," continued Clifton, as if speaking to himself.

"Why, massa? Fish alays on my hook; rabbits alays in my trap; ducks neber flies away when massa guying to shoot,—they know they needn't try."

"We *must* leave!" exclaimed Clifton, with a strong emphasis on the second word.

"Neber find such anudder spot, massa. Prittiest place in all creation. Wonder ebrybody don't want to come and lib here."

"Too many here already, boy."

"Can't find my traps."

"Why so?" said Clifton, amused at the contentment of the little negro.

"'Cause can't alays find 'em myself."

"Shelly, take both my rifles and the double-barrel gun down to the water and clean them well. Can you, boy?"

"Have done it many a time, massa."

Clifton now throwing himself into the rocking-chair, pitched one foot across the other on the table, and, leaning far back, began to read in his usually contented manner.

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### CHAPTER III.

DAY after day passed, and little occurred about the glen worthy of a careful record. Many were the pleasant rides and agreeable rambles taken by the ladies and their attendant. And often did the mention of Harrie Clifton awaken some witty remark, some interesting discussion, or some amusing or unkind conjecture about his real character. Fisher continued to meet him almost daily, but every interview only strengthened the conviction of the utter impossibility of ever inducing him to mingle again in society, or to disclose the mysterious event which had driven him, willingly or reluctantly, into the solitude of the forest. The impression produced by the recluse upon the mind of this gay and thoughtless youth was an intense admiration and an unsatisfied curiosity. And when his feelings were conveyed to the ladies with all the embellishments of a romantic fancy, it is quite natural that they should urge him on to renewed and more earnest efforts to obtain a solution of the mystery.

To Francis Fisher, never did a person, apparently, possess so much self-command. Those little, seemingly trifling, and almost imperceptible weaknesses of the human heart, which silently get the ascendant in man and lessen the love and respect of God for him, appeared to be entirely banished from his bosom. Hence he was happy. The majority of mankind resist only the common vices of the uneducated vulgar, and their life is a scene of suffering and remorse. They destroy the viper and let what they consider the harmless insect live, and lay themselves down to rest and have a weary and disturbed repose. Clifton vanquished them all and slept calmly, careless of what the next day might bring forth. Obedience to the natural and moral laws was the cause of his contentment. For he who is miserable is physically or morally wicked. And he who is happy is, generally speaking, a good and trustworthy man.

One beautiful afternoon, when the air in the dark forests had the freshness of the morning hour and the soothing stillness of a sleeping world, the recluse wandered alone. Far down the east bank of the Red Clay he rambled on, and, without even a respectful notice, passed Constance and Blanche, who were diligently engaged in gathering and botanizing flowers. At some distance from them Cora and Gertrude had paused, as if arrested by some distant prospect, which an opening in the woods had suddenly revealed. Continuing on, he came to a purling rivulet gliding down a ledge of rock, against which the obstructed waters of the Red Clay dashed in sparkling foam. Beech and maple and two large hemlocks spread a dense shade over the mossed and flowered banks at the junction of the two

streams. Laurels and fragrant shrubbery increased the loneliness and sombre gloom of this retired spot. But it was not the beauty of the place that caused Clifton to pause and gaze with riveted attention. A young female, whom he had never seen before, was reposing there. Her attitude was perfectly graceful, yet it appeared to have been carelessly assumed. The posture strikingly displayed the richness and the voluptuous fulness of her whole figure. Her dark glossy hair (loosened perhaps by the exertions of the day) fell in flowing ringlets upon her shoulders, contrasting beautifully with the snowy whiteness of her partly perceptible bosom. Her brightly expressive eye lay beneath its silken lash, regardless of the passing objects. And her sweet lips were slightly parted, as though she listened to the melody of some distant bird. The loveliness of her features was heightened by an intelligent and brilliant expression.

Clifton studied this picture of unrivalled beauty but a few moments, and turning away, unobserved by the fair being, wandered back to his cottage. The instant he entered his dwelling he opened a drawer in the old table and took out a likeness of some youthful female. And being entirely alone, he uttered the language of his feelings with a careless and unconscious freedom.

"What a striking resemblance! The eye, the lips,—silent lips,—yet how eloquent in their silence! The brow, the hair, the cast and outline of every feature, how like her! The same being, and yet not the same!"

While speaking, tears—big, warm, and glistening—fell upon the little miniature in his hand. A heavy

sigh broke forth, and told that the thoughts of other and happier years were agitating his bosom. He paced the floor, still holding his unguarded soliloquy.

"I must hear her speak! Yet if that voice be like the melody that once filled the world with gladness, how can I bear that harmony? The trial must be made! Is man so frail, so fickle, that he can love again? It cannot, may not be! These are but the feelings of other days awakened into life, and not created by a ripening love."

His comments upon the weakness of human nature were continued for some time, yet they did not prevent a trifling circumstance from occurring which seemed ominous of the future. At every passage before the mirror he cast a hurried glance over his fine person, and often pausing, adjusted by the toss of his head the profusion of fine locks which mantled his noble forehead. At last he made a calm observation of the time by his watch, and, taking his hat, proceeded down to the boat, and was soon landed on the opposite shore. Then even a careless observer might have noticed a more lively step and more portly carriage as he trod his accustomed walks in the old forest. He had not continued far when he was hailed by his new acquaintance, Francis Fisher.

"How are you, Harrie? I am very happy to see you again. I was just looking for you, and thought I could find you somewhere near the 'fern rock.' What's the matter? You walk faster than usual to-day."

"Nothing's the matter, sir. I saw you coming, and knew of course that you were hunting for me,—for

when did we ever meet that you were not looking for me?—so I concluded to come directly to you. What news have you? The same old tale, I suppose,—‘The ladies are exceedingly annoyed with my presence in this forest.’ ”

“Yes, Harrie, you have guessed the truth. The ladies saw you prowling about this afternoon, and have sent me to you again. They are beginning to regard you as a very unmannerly fellow, even if you should prove to be respectable.”

“Unmannerly! Well, there is some alteration in their views. Not long ago they thought me an outlaw. What way am I so unmannerly? Will you please explain to me their views?”

“Certainly; but do not suppose that because they have come to the conclusion that you are very impolite in your general bearing that they have revoked their former opinions. They still regard you as a very dangerous intruder.”

“And you have come again, for the twenty-second time, to tell me so,—ay? And there is nobody unmannerly but Harrie Clifton! Now see here, Fisher, I am tired of this eternal and never-ending pursuit. You have dogged me with a perseverance which has no parallel. Now, sir, this must have, and it shall have an end. I will go directly to the glen-mansion, and there before them all I will tell them who I am, what brought me here, and why I intend to remain. After that, if you continue to intrude yourself upon me, we will settle the matter in a way that will require no future adjustment.”

“Harrie Clifton, I most cheerfully accept your propo-



sition ; yes, even the final clause of it. But do you suppose that you can enter that house without an introduction ? You must prove to me that you are worthy of their countenance, and then I will take you there at once. But, sir, I will not, and as a gentleman I dare not, do it till you satisfy me that you are what you profess to be,—a respectable man."

"Why, sir, the disclosure can be made in their presence."

"Ay ! but Matilda."

"Well, what of Matilda?"

"She has an unconquerable fear of you, and I know will not permit you to come into her presence until she is satisfied that all is right."

"She fears me—ay !—and yet never saw me."

"Yes, she has seen you in the distance, but never was near to you."

"Very well, Mr. Fisher ; I will not blame her. Better be too cautious than too careless. And I suppose if I hesitate any longer to disclose to you my history you will all come to the conclusion that I am ashamed of it. Now, sir, you shall have it, and without a blush at the recital."

The recluse during this conversation had intentionally directed their course up the steep ascent towards the glen-mansion. And at this moment they stood upon a rocky knoll crowning the summit of the hill, from which the ground sloped in every direction. In full view, and nearly on a level with them, stood the dwelling of Mr. Irving, some three hundred yards to the southwest. While looking at the scene around them the ladies appeared in view, returning to their residence.

"Look at them!" exclaimed Fisher. "That one a few yards behind Cora is Matilda. Isn't she a floating glory?"

"I should rather call her a floating battery," said Clifton, laughing.

"Ah, you can't describe her!" said Fisher, in a kind of joyous exhilaration. "But come, let us have your narrative."

"Well," said Clifton, taking his seat upon the "summit rock" by the side of his companion, "there is, or rather was, a lady concerned in the affair."

"We thought so. Did you commit murder?"

"No, sir. I allowed every opportunity to pass without doing it."

"Then somebody else did it for you, I suppose."

"Probably; but if you interrupt me when shall I get through?"

"Go on. I'm a good listener."

"Ay! to the frailties of others, I've no doubt."

"Love of woman I hope is no frailty," said Fisher.

"Certainly not; but the recital of it renders one liable to the charge."

"It may to those who have never felt it."

"Then you have been in love?"

"Am at present. To you I need not be ashamed to own it."

"With Matilda, I presume?"

"Certainly! It could be with no one else. She is the only girl there is in this world!"

"Indeed! How does she receive you?"

"Like the weather," said Fisher,— "sunshine and storm in regular succession."

"Then you may be successful. 'Tis a good omen."

"Never mind us. We understand each other."

"Not engaged?" said Harrie, somewhat startled.

"Oh, no, not engaged; that is, not exactly. But, you know, there are certain smiles and glances of the eye that mean everything."

"Yes, yes; I understand it. Love has a language of its own, more eloquent, more potent than words."

"Precisely so. But will you proceed with your history?"

"I will. The lady's name, as I was about to tell you, was Elflora Lamar. And as my fate and hers were interwoven together, it is necessary that I should give you some account of her. When I first saw her eighteen summers had developed the young bud into a blooming flower. Her matchless figure, her dark sparkling eye, her noble countenance and indescribable and engaging manners, pleased, ay! entraptured that greater portion of mankind who are enslaved by these qualities alone. But those who could appreciate intrinsic worth and superior mentality found in Elflora all the bright and amiable traits which distinguish the never-fading beauty.

"This happy blending of the visible with the spiritual, and the individualizing of all into one glorious model of angelic loveliness, was the cause of that deep impression which she made upon every one who came within the sphere of her influence. The purity of the heart often gives expression to the eye and brow; it was eminently so with Elflora. In her countenance, however, there was little of that meekness and humility perceptible in the looks of many distinguished for

piety. This beautiful trait in her character was combined with so much firmness and intellect that her features showed more of the majesty than the tenderness of religion.

"All admired and many loved her. Several gentlemen sought a dearer connection with Elflora. But so pure, so devotional was her affection for her aged mother, and so fondly cherished, so generously appreciated was her attachment, that she could not, no, she would not leave her. The halcyon joys of that home were never clouded,—why should she wish to leave it? why indulge one thought upon the subject?

"At last I was so fortunate as to gain her affection. I visited her frequently during the alteration in her feelings, and never did her sensitive modesty appear so remarkable. To love a man was so entirely different from that strict reserve and that retiring delicacy of her divine nature, that a deep blush would often mantle her beautiful features as she struggled to conceal the change that was taking place in her bosom. At last she began to feel and to comprehend for the first time that unutterable tenderness that had existed between her parents. With an opened eye she looked upon the world, and saw with admiration and comfort the unspeakable, the enviable happiness of those who live agreeable to the moral and physical laws of a beneficent Creator. But why prolong the tale? The nuptial day arrived; she gave her heart and hand in holy and confiding trust to me.

"A few months of happiness—a few days of suffering—came and passed, and all was silent!"

"She died?"

“Yes, yes ; she died ! Her spirit dropped its shroud—that gorgeous cluster of roses which had shaded it on earth—and winged itself away to a home of rest.

“What a vacancy came over my feelings ! Nature in her richest beauty, life with all its melody, had no power to please. My heart was desolate ; my mind distracted and profanely careless of the future. Ambition slept, regardless of the allurements of wealth or the blandishments of fame. I had no kindred spirit to arouse my emulation. I was alone ! And the loneliness produced at last a kind of negative happiness.

“I looked upon the whirling vortex of life, and saw nothing there congenial to my feelings. I turned with a loathing satiety from all around me, and became a recluse in this secluded valley. And here, not to win the applause of man or the smiles of beauty, I have made myself a master of the hidden lore of antiquity,—of sciences the most profound and abstruse,—of the languages and literature of my own and of foreign lands. Wisdom is the fruit of knowledge ; I gathered it into the ample garner of the mind and lived obedient to its high behest, and am happy.”

## CHAPTER IV.

THE afternoon was nearly gone. The ladies of the glen sat in the drawing-room of their pleasant abode, and the light-hearted laugh, the joking repartee, and the playful irony of the conversation evinced the confidence reposed in each other, and how happy that little social circle, where the fulness of the heart was poured forth without restraint or embarrassment.

The horizon sunlight, glimmering through the shaded window, rested upon the painted walls; and then the ornaments on the mantel, the rich furniture, and the flowered carpet caught the reflected beams, and a mild lustre, soft as moonlight, filled the spacious room.

"How brightly the day closes along the west!" said Blanche Irving, passing from one window to another to catch the last expression of the changing scene. "If to-morrow should be clear," she continued; and then suddenly changing her voice, she exclaimed, "Come to the window! Yonder is Clifton and Francis Fisher! They are walking in a direction that will bring them full in view."

The summons was quickly obeyed, and for a while all were silent. The young men had approached nearly to the house.

"They will pass close by us," whispered Gertrude to Matilda, "and then you will have a good opportunity to see the recluse."

That moment the gentlemen arrived at the steps and began to ascend them.

"Oh, harries!" exclaimed all at once. And then the arranging of chairs and books, the folding of old love-letters, and getting seated in the most unconcerned manner occupied the next half-minute.

The door opened, and Clifton was presented. There was something in his manner at that moment observed by all the ladies. It was not the awkward bashfulness of one unaccustomed to society, nor the affected condescension of a man of the world, but an unassuming deference, delicately complimentary to those present.

It can easily be imagined that the little party were much surprised at this apparently unceremonious visit. The last they had heard from Clifton was a fixed and settled purpose never again to mingle in society, and a disposition to leave the country rather than reveal the particulars of his eventful life. And now he is present. What has revolutionized his feelings? Has he disclosed the secret of his past career? Such were the thoughts of that intelligent circle as they surveyed, with a curious and critical eye, the stern and striking features and the unrivalled form of the recluse.

But the conversation soon flowed so free and interesting, and Clifton's manner was so agreeable, so fascinating, that the ladies began to feel as if they had known him long, and would almost be willing to name him as one of their most valued friends.

Fitzwalter soon joined the delighted company, and was equally pleased with their new guest. An hour swept on and unobserved away, and when Harrie bade

an evening adieu he received an invitation again to visit the family.

Were we writing a minute memoir of Clifton's life and felt at liberty to throw it off in a voluminous work, we should dwell with pleasure upon the daily interviews that followed and the little occurrences that endear to the heart all who are worthy of a lasting regard.

Finally, the ladies were amused to discover that Francis and Harrie were both deeply fascinated by the same beauty. This gave a lively zest to every social ramble, and afforded a pleasant topic for an idle hour when the listless mind would rather trifle with an amusing than grapple with an instructive subject. Yet the favored one, with a generous sympathy, would gladly have seen the marked attention so assiduously bestowed upon her divided with either of her fair companions; but they, governed by a feeling of delicacy or self-respect, gave no evidence by an altered manner that they wished it to be otherwise. Indeed, it was clearly apparent from many a playful remark that they regarded the affair with a secret pleasure, as likely to give a dash of sterling reality or romantic incident to the sojourn of the beautiful visitors at the glen-mansion. And there was but one among them that did not paint upon the future a glowing picture of curious events which they fancied a few weeks would unveil.

One sunny and silent day Matilda stood by a curtained window, and while her delicate fingers played with the leaves of a volume she had just been reading a deep blush suddenly mantled her features, and the glance of her dark eye fell upon the book; she looked intently, as though she scanned an engraving. A few



minutes after, Harrie Clifton entered the room. Surprised and delighted to find his favorite alone, he advanced towards her, and, plucking a rose which lay loosely in the fold of his half-opened vest, tossed it lightly upon her bosom as he took a chair by her side. Their eyes met; they conversed; but so little was audible and so much was said by the quiet smile and the brightening glance and the play of intelligent features, that we will not attempt to convey it. This day had been fixed upon by some distant friends for the ladies and Fitzwalter to pay them a visit. But Matilda and Blanche had declined going, being, as they said, too unwell to enjoy the visit. Clifton was aware of it, and invited them to accompany him for the first time to his little cottage.

"Fisher will be offended should he discover our innocent ruse," said Blanche, as they were leaving the house.

"Indeed, I *had* the headache," replied Matilda.

"I know it," continued Blanche; "but no excuse will satisfy Francis Fisher. He is getting very sensitive. I happened to hear my dear brother joking him a little about it yesterday, and I can assure you it had a withering effect upon him."

"What did he say?"

"Well, he asked Francis if he thought there was any one within ten miles of this who really thought that Matilda was ever afraid of Clifton. He also said that your pretended fear was merely a pretext to induce Fisher to persuade Clifton to relinquish his solitary life."

"Did you ever!" exclaimed the Beauty. "And your brother, Fitzwalter Irving, said all that about *me*?"

"Yes, my dear, and something more."

"Well, after that I'm prepared to hear anything. What else did he say?"

"He intimated that the glowing description which we had given of the mere outward appearance of the recluse had excited your imagination and produced a strong partiality for him before you saw him."

"What ever caused him to entertain such an idea?" exclaimed Matilda; and then in a low whisper to her confidante, she said, "I thought I had *that* concealed from every human heart."

"Will Francis Fisher be at Mr. R.'s this afternoon?" inquired Clifton.

"He is invited," said Blanche, "and will go in his private carriage, and expected to bring Matilda home by moonlight without the incumbrance of a third person."

"That he should not have done," replied the Beauty.

"It would have been very unkind, my dear," said Blanche, "to have refused him, when he is so gentle, so obliging, so devoted to you at all other times."

"His attentions are very welcome when needed," rejoined Miss Seymour.

"When needed!" exclaimed Miss Irving; "that savors a little of coquetry."

"Then every lady at the glen is a coquette."

"Matilda, that is very unjust! We have and always have had a clear understanding with Francis Fisher."

"When I arrived at your residence," rejoined Matilda, "did I not find him paying particular and marked attention to one of your sisters?"

"Indeed you did not, my dear. If you thought so, you were most grievously mistaken. He knew that my sister's affections were unchangeably fixed upon one who is now—— But no matter. Fisher only waited upon her, and I may say, upon all of us, because he was and is very fond of intelligent female society. Please excuse my egotism, as I had to say it."

"That is certainly very much to his credit," said Clifton, as he assisted the ladies over a rock which lay in their path.

"Tell me what you think of Fisher?" said Matilda. "He appears to me to be a very artless youth; yet there are times when I thought I could perceive the glimpse of a very different character."

"He is," replied Miss Irving, taking up the question, "one of the most candid, artless, and sincere young men I ever met with."

"My dear friend," said Clifton, "are you certain that a longer acquaintance with him will not reverse that decision?"

"Yes, I am certain!" exclaimed Blanche. "I have known him many years. It cannot be possible that you have formed a different opinion?"

"Have you?" asked Matilda.

"I have."

"Then what is it?"

"When I do not think well of another," said Clifton, "I deem it the wiser course to say nothing."

"Not another step farther will I go," said Matilda, seating herself upon a rock, "till we hear your opinion."

"Nor I either," said Blanche Irving.

"Come," said Clifton, "we are nearly to the boat, and there will be ample time to tell you while passing up the lake."

"I have said it!" rejoined the favorite.

"Listen!" continued Clifton; "didn't you hear it thunder?"

"I did," said Matilda; "let it *thunder*!"

"'Tis really provoking. We shall be caught in a storm. However, do just what you please, my dear girls. It is very pleasant to me resting here on these rocks with such agreeable company. Shall I send word up to the house that you will not be home to tea this evening, and that you have concluded to remain here during the night?"

As the recluse concluded these remarks he seated himself, and very leisurely began to whittle a stick. The ladies could not help laughing at the perfect resignation of the youth as he quietly awaited some movement on their part. At last Matilda, rising to her full height and endeavoring as much as possible to appear offended, although a rich smile could be faintly seen trembling and lighting and touching her upper lip like a humming-bird fluttering around a flower, exclaimed, "Harrie Clifton, at the risk of my high displeasure I command you to tell us what you think of Francis Fisher!"

"Certainly I will tell you, as a just reward for such an eloquent display of oratorical gestures, and because it appears that you consider my opinions worth knowing. I think that Francis is one of the most artlessly artful, and hence the most dangerous young man I ever knew."

This announcement had a chilling effect upon his listeners. Blanche Irving seemed for a moment so astounded that she was silent. At last the natural tenderness and generosity of her nature, and the remembrance of many acts of disinterested kindness received from Fisher, aroused her to a vigorous defence, and she repelled the accusation as the mere suggestion of prejudice, and even boldly declared that jealousy was at the foundation of the charge.

"How could you know him," said she, triumphantly, "when you have only met him some dozen or twenty times?"

"I read the heart of man as the lightning rends the oak,—instantly," replied Clifton, in a manner that indicated the confidence reposed in his own decision.

"That may be very true," rejoined Blanche. "But when your opinion is just as destructive to human character as the lightning is to the noble tree, it is our duty to inquire into the motive which induced you to form such a conclusion. For my part, I am satisfied that you are jealous of Francis Fisher. And I must confess that this discovery lowers you in my estimation *very*, very much indeed. Who could believe it! that you could be influenced by such a passion to utter such words against a rival! You are very sorry already, are you not, Harrie Clifton, for using such language?"

"I am sorry that I was so unguarded, so very imprudent, as to confess to you that such was the conviction forced upon my mind during frequent interviews with Francis Fisher. But do you suppose that I can feel the least regret that I have discovered his repulsive traits of character when this revelation can be of so much use

to you, provided you believe and ponder upon my words?"

"Well, now, will you please to tell me," inquired Blanche, "what you see in Francis that is so very repulsive to your feelings? He is very wealthy: is that to you a great objection? He is exceedingly entertaining: that, I suppose, you can't abide. He is remarkably good looking,—that, of course, you abhor. And last, but not least, he has always been reputed a man of honor. That quality, too, you doubtless repudiate as a trifle."

"Really, Miss Irving, you are incomprehensible! Your language is plain enough to be understood by every one, that is very certain; but whether to receive it as playful irony or downright earnest talk is more than I can divine. Ah! that look is sufficient. I understand you now. You mean exactly what you say?"

"I do."

"Very well, then, I will reply to your unkind remarks. Francis Fisher is a man of wealth, hence he can afford to be honest. Temptation pressed on by stern necessity has never crossed his path. Adversity has never placed on trial the integrity of his mind.

"The stability of a man's character can only be known, can only be tested in the storms of life. To him all has been sunshine, without a cloud to shade the walk before him. And thus the world sees him, and knows him not. But I know him. Self is the god that he serves, and owns allegiance to no other. Beware, my dear girl, of all such men. They will kiss you for a favor, caress you for your patronage, and in *your* day of trouble will shun you for the kindness which you have done them. Francis, surrounded by the flowers

of life, is no doubt a very honorable man, agreeable in the parlor, entertaining in the idle ramble, and convenient in your frequent rides through the country. But beware of that little germ which lies undeveloped in his nature. Don't cultivate it by ploughing up the path which he walks, or you will find a upas-tree growing in your garden."

"You offend me!" said Blanche Irving.

"Then I most humbly beg your pardon. Will you forgive me? I sincerely hope that I am mistaken in my analysis of his character. I pray that he may pass through a long life without meeting anything to mar its present aspect. Once more I ask it, will you forgive me?"

"Yes," said Miss Irving, forcing a smile upon her countenance with the same effort that she would indent the surface of a hard apple with her thumb.

As the excitement of the conversation somewhat subsided, it became evident that a storm was gathering in the western horizon. Dark masses of cloud were seen piled along the forests, and broad sheets of flame to brighten and blaze about their summits, followed at shorter intervals by heavy and jarring peals of thunder.

There was a moment of doubt and hesitation, whether to return or proceed without delay to the cottage. But being assured by Clifton that they could easily reach it before the rain commenced, they embarked, and were soon gliding up the lake. The recluse pulled his oar with a skill and precision that made the little skiff bound away as though impelled by the velocity of a torrent.

But ere they reached their destination the accustomed summer breeze lulled into an ominous calm. The birds

became silent in every grove, the sky overshadowed to a twilight gloom, and a settled quietude rested upon hill and valley. The forest reflected in the smooth and darkened water stood so still and motionless it seemed the fossils of an earlier world. Suddenly a flash of vivid light illumined the whole scene, and a burst of thunder echoed from vale to vale, and then a roar like a distant cataract came nearer and yet nearer, till at last the gathered storm of wind and rain and the torn fragments of old forests rushed in one wild tornado across the country.

Clifton and his fair companions received the first break of the tempest beneath the pendent branches of an oak which overhung the stream. But the moment the first heavy blow had partially subsided they left the boat, and, hurrying through the woods, succeeded in entering the cottage in a tolerably dry condition. Some time was now occupied in disconnected remarks and in listening to the heaving of the lofty oaks and the rattling of torrents of water upon the roof and windows and on the foliage around them. But when the troubled elements settled at last into an ordinary shower, the ladies flushed up to a cheerful smile and began to examine with a pleased and critical eye the natural curiosities and other attractive objects of that pleasant abode. The attention of Miss Irving became absorbed in the rich collection of rare minerals, and she fingered them with the interest of an amateur. And Matilda began a careful survey of the library with equal enthusiasm.

"Who could have expected," she exclaimed, "to see Newton's '*Principia*' and the '*Mécanique céleste*'



of Laplace in this cottage? And what a selection of other scientific works! And poetry! My dear Blanche, do look at the volumes of poetry! Harrie, have you arranged them according to their merit?"

"If you approve of the order in which they stand I will pronounce it to be the case, and differ with every one who may dare to think otherwise."

The lady bowed to the compliment, and continued: "I will examine them, and carefully, and may find out something of your character by this exhibition of your literary taste." She added, with a meaning smile which plainly showed that she had not forgotten his severe remarks on Francis Fisher: "I will commence with your British bards: Byron, Shakspeare, Milton, Pope, Scott, Dryden, Campbell, Burns, Rogers, Moore, Thomson, Young, Cowper, Goldsmith, Swift, Kirke White, Gray, Collins, Beattie, Falconer, Savage, Hannah More, and one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight others. What confusion! What an arrangement! Is it out of some secret dislike to woman that you place Hannah More below others who are less gifted? Or is it respect for her exalted character that you remove her so far from Byron? At my request do give her a shelf on the other side of the room. And I think if you will place Shakspeare and Milton above Byron, it will be more consistent with the world's decision."

"I cannot consent," replied Clifton, "to the removal of Byron. As for Hannah More, she may go."

"Hush!" said Matilda, in a tone of tenderness and a playful wave of the hand, as she guessed at the conclusion.

"But where is my favorite Ossian? And where is Akenside?"

"Here they are, Matilda, on my table. I had forgotten to put them up."

"Well, where do they belong?" inquired the Beauty, as she took the volumes in her hand.

"Wherever you please to put them."

"Thank you. I will place them—— Let me see. They shall go between Young and Thomson."

"Exactly, my dear child. That is the very place I put them when I fixed up my cottage."

"Now come," said the lady, "I am going to attack your German authors." And she began to read: "Goethe, Schiller, Klopstock, Lessing, Wieland, Herder, and five—no, six—others of lesser note. Quite a good selection, but I must alter your arrangement a little. Klopstock, the German Milton, should be next to Goethe. You will not object, will you, Harrie?" she added, in such a kind manner that he at once consented. "Now for the bards of Italy!" she exclaimed, with a degree of enthusiasm and pleasure that would have astonished a cold and prosaic mind who had no taste for the divine art. "Let me see. You have Dante, Tasso, Ariosto, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Metastasio, Alfieri, and five little satellites in their train. I like that order, Harrie, though perhaps it would be better if the divine Ariosto was above Tasso."

Clifton smiled and shook his head. "Here," said he, "are some French authors in prose as well as poetry. How do you like my arrangement of them? I will read the titles: Voltaire, Rousseau, Racine, Madame de Staël, Molière, Boileau, Corneille,

St. Pierre, Châteaubriand, Cottin, Le Sage ; but I will not tire you with the whole list, as it is a long one. What do you think of it?"

"Indifferently well," said Miss Seymour. "But do not expect an impartial criticism from me respecting the relative merit of French authors. The religious sentiments of many of them are so repugnant to my feelings that I know prejudice would influence my decision."

"Then, indeed, you are excusable," said Clifton. "For there are already too many opinions in this world made up in that manner, when the feelings and not the judgment have decided."

"See what a singular coincidence," remarked Matilda. "Here we have on the summit of Parnassus Byron, Goethe, Dante, and Voltaire; all of them, when mere boys, fell in love with ladies older than themselves, and all were rejected."

"You do not consider that a disadvantage, Miss Seymour?"

"No, not to a poet. I do not think that Dante would have written so well had not his lovely Beatrice furnished him with a model of all that is most beautiful in woman. And Goethe, no doubt, is indebted to the Margaret of his early years for the loveliness of his heroines."

"Well done!" exclaimed Miss Irving, approaching. "What a congenial couple! A great pity you were not acquainted years ago."

"Look at the library, my dear Blanche," said Matilda, coloring to a deep crimson.

"Beautiful!" said Miss Irving; "a very happy idea

to arrange the volumes according to their merit. But what an error of taste or judgment in the disposal of Gray! I would place him, without hesitation, by the side of Burns. Did you ever read in any language a more eloquent and feeling poem than 'Gray's Elegy'?"

"That is very true," said Clifton. "He certainly deserves a higher place in the temple of fame than I have given him."

"And what would you think of my literary taste," said Blanche, "should I insist upon Scott being placed above Pope?"

"I scarcely know what to say," rejoined Clifton. "They are so unlike each other that it is almost useless to compare them together. Scott has more of the inventive, the descriptive and dramatic talent, than Pope, while the latter has a more finished execution, more melody, more harmony in his lines. He was a perfect master of the heroic couplet. Scott is remarkable for his attachment to the octo-syllabic verse. And no one ever wrote it better. He professed to consider it superior to the heroic, and does not hesitate to declare that the long lines of Pope contain many superfluous epithets. Scott was too anxious to sell, and did not bestow as much labor on his productions as he ought to have done."

"That solves the whole mystery," said Matilda. "Scott knew that more matter could be thrown off in his favorite measure in a given time than in any other, hence the very plain reason he preferred it to all others. Had he loved fame more and money less he would not have been so careless or so partial."

"Come, come," said Blanche, "I cannot listen to

one word against Sir Walter Scott. In many respects a brighter character never lived and suffered in this world."

"I am very sorry," rejoined Matilda, "that your favorite author abandoned poetry and took to writing mere novels. Works of fiction are often so injurious to the mind."

"Matilda," said Clifton, "your remark awakens a question of the highest interest, involving as it does the whole nature of man. Let us reflect upon it a moment. The readers of every era are naturally partial to some peculiar medium of mental expression. In the days of Shakspeare the drama was the great popular channel through which the master-spirits of the age entertained, enlightened, and amused their fellow-men. But when Addison and Steele and others appeared upon the field of active life, the polite essay sought and gained the public favor, and for a while was the most popular literature of the language. But soon poetry in the hands of Pope and his thousand imitators obtained the ascendant, then almost every genius, emulous of literary distinction, strove to be a poet. But those days are gone; the drama, the polite essay, and the song of the muse are comparatively silent, and the novel, emphatically, has become the title essential to a wide and general circulation. Hence men of genius, the most gifted and comprehensive, devote their time and talents to the production of romance, sensible that through no other channel can they so well secure a world of readers. The result is apparent: every other department of learning has lost the prolific pen of some able and eloquent writer. And shall

we lose this vast accumulation of intellectual treasure because imaginary characters are made to utter the wisdom and reflections of undoubted genius? Shall we discard the reading of all such works because many of them are injurious to the young mind? I believe it to be a fact, however lamentable, that sentiments of the purest piety and the soundest morality, clothed in the most beautiful language, and bound in volumes entitled religious instruction for the young, would seldom reach the heart or hand of him who most needs them, while the same pure thoughts and elevated principles interwoven in an interesting plot, and published as a work of fiction, would be read, admired, and cherished by the dissolute million."

"Very true," said Matilda; "and if bad novels were not read more than good ones I could freely endorse your philosophy."

"Excuse me for interrupting you," said Miss Irving; "is it not time that we were returning home?"

"Not yet! not yet!" exclaimed Matilda; "and how can we? it is still raining."

"But when will it be any better?" replied Blanche, walking to the west window and looking earnestly at the dull dark sky. "The appearance of the clouds indicates a settled rain and of some continuance."

"What think you, Harrie?" said the other, also gazing up at the dusky canopy above them. "It certainly will clear about sunset."

"Sunset!" exclaimed Miss Irving; "if I am not very much mistaken the sun is already down. See how dark it is getting."

"You are both wrong in your conjectures," said

Clifton. "The sun is not down. Neither will it clear off this evening. But as to returning now, that is out of the question. The rain is increasing every moment."

"What shall we do?" said Blanche, impatiently walking the floor.

"Be contented," rejoined the recluse, "and remain here till morning."

"Impossible! How can we?"

"Why, my dear Blanche," said Matilda, "I don't think it would be so very disagreeable."

"My dear, you don't think what you are saying," returned Miss Irving, with a look of gentle reproof.

"Clifton, is not this the only room in the house?"

"Yes, the only one. But is it not comfortable?"

"Certainly; but we must go home when this shower is over."

"Very well; but you must have some refreshment before you go. Shelly, rouse up the fire, boy, and let us have some coffee strong enough to float a silver spoon."

"Oh! no, no, Clifton!" exclaimed Blanche. "It will detain us too long. We would much rather give you no trouble, and that you would return with us to tea."

"But we can't go through all this rain," replied Matilda, secretly delighted with the idea of taking supper in Harrie Clifton's cottage, although she could see no more sign of anything to eat than in an old dry oyster-shell. Finally, Miss Irving looked out at the door and satisfied herself that it was raining in such a decided manner that it seemed evident that the clouds had another ark to float, and that the time was limited

to less than forty days. Then she returned and composed herself on the settee, and became interested in the movements of the little negro. He glided about with such a noiseless activity, and without a single order being necessary to guide him in his duty, that she began to suspect that there had been some pre-arrangement made for their visit. He cleared the papers off the large table in the middle of the room, opened a drawer in the large bureau, took out, unfolded, and spread a cloth of such snowy whiteness, and so fine in quality and figure, that the ladies looked at each other in surprise. He then opened and entered a passage in the floor at the northwest corner of the room, and seemed to crawl into a deep vault which penetrated the hill on the outside of the house. He soon returned with covered dishes, and again disappeared and returned until he had placed on the table everything necessary for the occasion. It was now about that hour in the evening when people say "It is almost too early to light a candle, and yet it is too dark to see without one."

The little servant thought so too; and then he lit and placed upon the table two brilliant lights. It was then the astonishment of the ladies broke forth in an audible exclamation. Every article that is considered by the opulent as necessary to constitute a complete set of silver plate for the evening table was there before them. Even the solid and massive candlesticks were of that metal.

Clifton for a while allowed his fair companions to enjoy their surprise, and then said, "I know this must appear to you so inappropriate, so entirely out of har-



mony, in fact, so inconsistent with my humble abode, that you must regard it as a mark of frailty or weakness in me to have these costly ornaments. Therefore I think some explanation necessary. When I relinquished housekeeping in a large establishment and resolved to become a recluse, I not only kept such trifles as might be needed here, but retained many others, because they were connected with the happiest period of my life."

The ladies at once detected on the plate the initials of a long-lamented bride, Elflora Lamar. When everything was ready for the repast, even to the proper placement of the chairs, Clifton handed Miss Irving to a seat, and then, taking Matilda by the hand, conducted her to the head of the table. For a moment the lady was exceedingly embarrassed and blushed and faltered in her movements, but recovered herself almost instantly, and then with grace and dignity she reigned and ruled through the entertainment.

"I was always under the impression," said Miss Irving, "that a recluse had to forego nearly all the comforts of domestic life, but you have them in abundance," she added, glancing her eye at a pile of light biscuit and several wild fowl upon the table.

"Shelly is an active little fellow," said Clifton, casting a look of approbation upon the little black as he stood behind Matilda. "I have only to say what I would like to have, and with money in his tiny hand away he goes and never returns without it."

"Did you not expect to retain us this evening?"

"I did."

"Not all night!" asked Matilda.

"Why not?" rejoined Clifton. "You have no idea of the resources within my reach."

"Let us stay and see what he will do," said Miss Seymour.

"Indeed we will not if we can get away," rejoined Miss Irving, laying down her knife and fork, and listening, as she continued: "Is it possible that the rain is so heavy as to make all that uproar which we hear without?"

"Indirectly it is," answered Harrie; "the stream has risen to a freshet, and is now sweeping grandly against the bank just below us."

"Is not the cottage in danger? May it not be undermined?"

"Not in the least danger," said the recluse. "Before dark did you not notice the large chestnut on the edge of the precipice close by this west window? Besides, the whole brow of the hill is covered with beech and laurel and other kinds of trees. So you are as safe here as in your own mansion."

"If the Red Clay has become such a roaring torrent as all this, how shall we get home?" asked Matilda, as she poured a shower of rich cream upon half a dozen lumps of loaf-sugar and began to eat them.

"Ah, yes, that spoils all the beauty of it," rejoined Blanche, as she sipped enjoyingly at her last cup of coffee.

"Rather adds to it," replied Miss Seymour, laughing at the serious air of her friend.

When the supper was ended, Miss Irving again looked out, and, having satisfied herself and prevailed on the others to agree with her that the rain was fast abating,

they prepared for their departure. Of course, Clifton's wardrobe was now placed under immediate requisition. As the bonnets worn at that day were too flimsy to be of any service and would be in the way, a couple of cloth caps were handed out to supply their place, and two ample cloaks were provided to keep off the wet and the coldness of the night, for it was noticed that a considerable change had taken place in the temperature of the air. The ladies arrayed themselves before the glass, and as the deep blushes awakened by their *gentlemanly* appearance did not subside as they paced the room in their full and flowing mantles, no wonder Harrie complimented them on the great improvement in their looks.

All being ready and everything provided that could be thought of to make his guests comfortable, Clifton, with lantern in hand, led the way, followed by Matilda and Blanche with as lively an air and a laugh as free and joyous as ever spoke a guileless heart in woman.

"Matilda, you shook that tree on purpose. What a shower you have brought down upon me!" said Blanche, endeavoring to shake the drops of water off her cap.

"No, my dear, it was an accident. I blundered against it trying to keep up with Harrie."

"Come on, my dear girls; never mind a few drops of rain. I expect to drown you both before midnight."

"I hope you will be brave enough to take the bath with us," replied Matilda, laughing.

"How can you talk so lightly of a serious matter?" said Blanche Irving.

"There is the boat at last!" exclaimed Clifton. "Look at it," he continued, as he turned the light upon it; "how it pitches about on the waves, like a frightened colt at the end of its halter!"

"Do you expect to rock me in that cradle?" asked Matilda, in a half-playful but somewhat alarmed manner.

"It really does look dangerous," rejoined Blanche. "Do you think you can row us down safely, Harrie?"

"It will require no rowing," returned Clifton. "Ten minutes will not elapse after we leave till we are down to the landing, although it is nearly a mile below us."

"Ten minutes," said Miss Irving, musingly; "that would not be long to be on the water. Certainly nothing need happen in that short time. Get in, that we may see how it looks."

The request was complied with, and the skiff, settled by his weight, showed for a moment a deceitful quietness.

"Come in, Matilda," said Blanche, stepping down into the bottom of the boat and seating herself. "Ten minutes of suspense, and then we'll be more than half-way home."

Matilda obeyed without hesitation, and then Clifton turned and said, "Who *can* I trust with this light? I will need both my hands to guide us."

"Give it to me!" exclaimed Blanche. "I *must* take care of it myself."

All being prepared, the boat was unfastened and shoved into the glancing and boiling current. No word of command was necessary to bid the racer go. The

moment the little bark felt the rush of waters it seemed suddenly to become a living thing, a being that spurned the wild fury of the elements and bounded and sported above them with exulting joy.

The first long stretch of water was passed so swiftly, so safely, that all fear was banished, and a pleased and vociferous excitement took its place. But they were now to make the first grand curve in the lake, and the rush of everything seemed against the rocky hill in front. The boat was laid in and off so finely and so fast around the drooping boughs of trees, that Blanche, enraptured by the view, held the light high above her head the better to illuminate the scene. That instant a limb caught the lantern and pitched it far, and the lake swallowed it. Suddenly everything was wrapt in darkness, and so impossible was it to see even one another that each felt alone and at the mercy of a driving torrent. Words of inquiry were frequently uttered to ascertain that all were still together. Clifton determined to shoot the barge ashore at the next bend, even at the risk of upsetting. But no sign of anything could be seen to mark their course,—not a shadow, nor tree, nor outline of forest. All was darkness around, above, and beneath them. Strange and singular was the sensation. They seemed on a whirling mass of waters and not within fifty miles of any shore, so extensive and deep was the sea of gloom. And now, ere they were aware of their position, or conscious of having run their course so far, a roar came up from the cataract so near, that nothing could be done to avoid it. One terrific scream burst from the ladies as their fate flashed upon them, and then they clasped each

other and waited in breathless silence the result. That instant down the falls the vessel plunged, and then shot out, bow foremost, upon a huge rock. So great was the velocity of the boat when it struck that all were pitched forward; and Clifton, springing out, dragged his companions to his side the moment the skiff floated off and dashed away down the stream.

And now they were motionless, while everything around appeared stirring with a wild and strange energy! They occupied a large oval rock within a few feet of the boiling cataract, and nearly in the middle of the stream. The splash of the waters constantly wet them. The roar was deafening. The darkness was impenetrable, and there was a fixed certainty that no help could reach them, and that there was no escape from their perilous position till daylight came and a subsidence of the freshet.

"Which way are we going?" exclaimed Matilda.  
"My head is dizzy with all this tumult."

"No way. We are quiet now."

"Why, then, do you hold me so firmly? Is there any danger?"

"Danger there certainly is if you force me to let go. You know not where we are. Notwithstanding we are on a large rock, all of it that is out of water is no larger than the leaf of a breakfast-table."

"But can't we sit alone?"

"No, you cannot; for you are not acquainted with the geography of this little atom of the world we now occupy."

"Are we safe at last?" inquired Blanche Irving.

"We are," replied Clifton, "provided we remain

quiet. One careless movement would plunge you into a gulf where none could rescue you."

"Then do let us get away from here. It is very disagreeable."

"My dear Blanche, have you no idea of our position?" rejoined the youth. "Here on the western side we are nearly surrounded by falls of water, and it is at least fifty feet to the mainland. And on the east, although much narrower, the stream is deep and very rapid, and bounded by craggy rocks and trees so dense that you could scarcely get through them in broad daylight. We must be contented to remain till morning."

"Do you know exactly where we are?" inquired Blanche.

"I do. And often have been upon this rock at low water. I am certain of it. There is no other rock high and large enough to contain us, so near the falls, at such a time as this. You saw me here once."

"Oh, yes! I remember it now very well. I saw you here the very afternoon that Cora fell out of the boat into the lake, and a cousin of ours helped her out; he had come down from the city to see her."

"Yes, I saw the accident."

"And it was on this rock that you were sitting?"

"It was. And little did I then think the day, or night either, would ever come when I would be posted up in this same spot with one arm around your waist and the other around Matilda, and both of you as quiet and gentle as kittens sleeping by a warm stove."

"Ah, yes; that was before Matilda made her appearance. You were very unsociable at that time."

"Very much so, of course, having no acquaintance

with you. Had you been as fearful of me as Miss Seymour was, and been as determined to drive me away, we might have become intimate long ago."

"Ah! that's it, is it? She was very much afraid of you," said Blanche, trying to laugh audibly. "And is now just as much as she ever was."

"I think we have reason to fear him," said the Beauty. "Look at the condition we are in now."

"Harrie is not so much to blame," replied Miss Irving. "Did ever the down of a thistle sail more beautifully or faster on a gale of wind than we did coming down the lake till I lost the light?"

"It was a most glorious dash for a few minutes," said Miss Seymour, "but a most daring, reckless adventure. Harrie Clifton should have had more prudence."

"Prudence!" exclaimed the youth; "the fault was not mine. I had entire command of the boat, and could have run the course safely had we not lost the light."

"Then you think there was no imprudence in trusting our lives to one little frail, flickering light, that a mere breath of air might extinguish or a trifling accident render useless?"

"You are right, Matilda. It was thoughtless and unwise in me to allow myself to be persuaded to embark with you. And did I not feel now that the danger is over, my sufferings would be intolerable."

Just at this moment a dark object appeared on the verge of the falls, and then pitched over and rolled heavily up the rock upon which they were sitting, and poised, and then swinging round, was out of sight in an instant.



"There, that indeed was something to fear," said Blanche. "If the water had been but a few inches higher that big log would have shaved us off as easily as you could brush a fly from your hand. You cannot deceive me. I've seen too many freshets in this stream to be mistaken. We are standing upon the verge of eternity. A rise of six inches or a foot more and this rock is no longer tenable."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Matilda. "Is the danger not over yet?"

"I hope it is," said Clifton; "the clouds are breaking, and there will be no more rain. The flood, I think, is subsiding, and do you not both perceive it is getting lighter? The moon will soon be above the forests, and we may have it clear and beautiful yet before day."

"That may all be very true or very far from the truth," said Blanche. "Look yonder! another log! another log, and coming directly towards us!"

All was now breathless anxiety. Each watched it with an interest never before manifested at such an occurrence. In fact, it was to decide the question whether the waters were rising or receding. It came end foremost, and, plunging over, shot up on the rock, giving Clifton's foot such a dead, heavy blow that it jarred and moved his companions.

"There is no safety here," exclaimed Matilda, trying to rise upon her feet; "the flood is increasing!"

"No, Matilda, no; sit still, or you may lose your balance," rejoined Clifton. "There is no proof that the stream is rising. You noticed the last log came

end foremost, hence the reason it rose higher on the rock."

"One thing is certain," replied Blanche: "we are in the middle of the main current, and will be exposed to everything that comes down."

"That is very true," said the recluse. "If this rock was not in the current we would have escaped it ourselves and by this time been insensible to all danger."

All eyes were now riveted on the lake, and as it grew lighter they could see every object that approached the falls.

"What is that dark speck? Fortunately, it is too small to harm us."

That instant it pitched over and heaved up so near that Clifton caught it.

"A man's hat," said he, as he held it up and poured the water out of it.

"What can it mean?" inquired Matilda.

"Nothing, nothing," returned the youth, "It doubtless has been cast away by its owner."

"Not so, Harrie; it is nearly new."

"Yonder again!" exclaimed Blanche, "another object still larger coming!"

All looked, and all exclaimed at once, "A corpse! A human body!" Feet foremost it came down the falls, with arms tossing upon the heaving waters, the head thrown up, with its horrid ghastly expression fixed upon them. It struck the rock and was surged up against their feet, and there for a moment lay with teeth clinched and bare and eyes wildly staring; then heavily back it rolled, and was whirled by the angry torrent down the stream.

"What a picture of our fate! How few are the minutes we have to live! Keep your arms around us, Harrie; let us perish or survive together," said Matilda, in a manner so resigned and quiet she seemed to have lost all fear as she leaned against the youth and looked up in his countenance with a tenderness and trust that knew no guile and sought no shadow to conceal the feelings of her heart.

An hour of watchful anxiety passed away, and as it became evident that the flood was very slowly subsiding the alarm was naturally lessened, and at last entirely disappeared. The conversation for some time was general and interesting, but finally it changed its tone to commonplace remarks upon the weather, and then Blanche and Clifton carried it on alone, with only an occasional word from Matilda. They noticed that her head gradually began to droop and her breathing to become more audible and heavy, till at last it settled into a calm repose.

"Harrie," said Miss Irving, as she looked upon the pale Beauty, "that's a precious charge sleeping upon your bosom. She is innocent as the lamb, pure as the morning dew, and bright as the sunbeam. Years have I known her, and every day only adds a deeper, holier cause to love her."

"God bless her!" said the recluse, as a tear dropped from his eye on one of her locks and stood for a moment like a diamond twined in her dark hair.

"If it should ever be your good fortune," continued the lady, "to call her all your own, cherish her with the tenderness of an infant, the confidence of a parent, and the generosity of a Christian."

"Certainly. To do otherwise I should forfeit my self-respect."

"But be not too sanguine," rejoined Blanche; "you have a mountain of difficulties to overcome. Francis Fisher has not only the advantages of a splendid fortune, but he has the powerful support of influential friends."

"Then if I understand you," said Clifton, "her hand is literally, not figuratively, in the market."

"No; that is not true. You speak unkindly," said Miss Irving. "Let me be clearly understood. We do not consider that wealth gives its possessor real respectability, but we do say that he who is respectable and in high standing in society must have a fortune to maintain his position. I know that this appears to be a stain upon the human character, yet it is a fact, and that is all that concerns us at present. The truth is, matrimony is a very expensive business; I mean, of course, in the circle in which Matilda moves, and I can assure you her friends will not let her forget it. This is the influence which will be brought against you and in favor of your wealthy rival. Of your prospects they know nothing, and the natural inference, judging, of course, from appearances, is that you have but little. You know not how many a lovely and loving pair are now living in single misery, not in single blessedness, because their feelings will not allow them to marry and live below that station to which they have been accustomed."

"The etiquette of society is a heartless despot," said Clifton, "and I will not be a slave to such a tyrant."

"But there are those who will," said Blanche, "and among them I think will be found the husband of Matilda Seymour."

The moon, which had struggled for hours among heavy masses of drifting clouds, now appeared above the forest, floating in a field of blue sky, and looking down upon the glen, unrolled her silver light upon the dark foliage, the splashing waters, and the broken crags around them. Quiet beauty throned on a peaceful calm was striving to blend herself with the sternest aspect and the wildest uproar of the elements.

As the moonlight fell upon the pale features of Matilda, and every outline of their rich moulding became visible among the shadows of her glossy ringlets, the attention of Clifton was again directed to her by Miss Irving.

"How lovely! Mark with what confidence she slumbers upon your bosom. She is no heartless worshipper at the shrine of wealth. It is the blighting, the withering influence of this world that may rend her from you. Her father, I have reason to believe, will be against you. And the danger is that a deep sense of filial duty may induce her to yield at last to the inflexible will of her parent. I make this disclosure to you in confidence, that you may understand the motives which I know will influence her and her family."

The conversation was interrupted by the appearance of another object on the lake. It was soon discovered to be Clifton's light canoe, impelled by the little servant, who was evidently in search of his master. A loud and prolonged whistle soon brought him near

enough to receive a command. He was ordered to return to the cottage to procure a long rope, and be back as soon as possible.

"Why, Matilda, did the whistling awaken you?" said Blanche, observing that her friend was gazing about in a kind of strange bewilderment.

"Something did. How different everything appears! How plain we can see everything about us! What a beautiful moon! How light! How pretty that water sparkles over the falls. The stream has lowered very much, has it not?"

Her question was answered favorably, and a strong hope expressed that they would be enabled to gain the shore before daylight. Clifton stood up and surveyed the whole prospect around them, endeavoring to form some plan by which he might land his companions with the least possible risk. He soon discovered that there was but one way it could be done while the freshet continued. He then communicated to the ladies his intention, and enjoined upon them the most implicit obedience to his directions. Scarcely half an hour elapsed till the little negro was seen gliding down the moonlit lake with a speed almost equalling the flight of an arrow. The velocity of the current, the lightness of the canoe, and the skilful play of his paddle all combined to render our comparison almost literally true. He was instructed to shoot into the east bank as near the falls as possible. As soon as this was performed he was told to fasten a cord to each end of the skiff, and throw the stern rope to Clifton. This was done, and the first trial succeeded,—the cord was caught. The canoe was now under their control, and

allowed to drift over the falls. When Harrie had dragged it to him and secured it, the boy was ordered to move down and take his station below the cataract. Everything being now ready, Blanche entered the boat, and was safely pulled across the rapid waters. The canoe was soon warped back, and then Matilda, and afterwards Clifton, was conveyed over in the same manner. The ladies were now led some distance up the shore. The boat, by means of the cord, was drawn up the falls. And then every one was paddled over the lake and landed on that bank from which they had embarked the day before with the most pleasing anticipations of a delightful visit to Harrie Clifton's cottage.

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## CHAPTER V.

THREE days have elapsed since the occurrence mentioned in the last chapter. We are now sitting in the shadow of an old apple-tree nearly in front of the glen-mansion. Four persons, two ladies and a couple of gentlemen, have just mounted their horses before the dwelling. We will examine their appearance with some care, for although the reader has become partially acquainted with them, he would scarcely recognize their features in the position they now occupy.

That lady in the long riding-habit of light blue, and silk velvet cap of the same color, with tassels pendent and waving at every motion, and raven curls clustering

around her pale forehead and now nearly bloodless cheek, and whose slender and well-proportioned figure is seen to advantage in the graceful air and natural dignity of manner as she reins and controls with a single hand the prancing and impatient ardor of her beautiful steed, is, indeed, the matchless Matilda Seymour. The other lady you recognize at once as her favorite and confidante, the amiable and intelligent Blanche Irving.

To a careful observer, the gentlemen present such a striking difference in their bearing and appearance, that it may not be entirely uninteresting to notice their peculiarities.

That youth who is engaged at this moment in earnest conversation with the heroine, may be known by the deep respect and profound esteem with which he regards the lady. Such qualities you at once perceive, by the clearness of his eye and the thoughtful cast of his features, are the result of an equal and harmonious development of the moral sentiments and the intellectual attributes of the mind. And you are pleased to detect, by his marked humility, a soul capable of understanding and appreciating with thankful reverence that beneficent wisdom which has made woman what she is in her relations to a God-serving and faithful man. Such is the impression produced upon you by Harrie Clifton.

The other gentleman must not be neglected. He is talking with Miss Irving in language so polite and with an intonation of voice and a suavity of manner so consistent with the requirements of polished life, that you are soothed and beguiled into a strong prepossession in



his favor. But to one who looks below the surface of human character, he appears a being only to be admired for the outward adornment of the person, and never to be loved with that singleness of heart which constitutes the real reality in the experience of a spiritually-minded woman.

In fact, it was difficult to discover, but the trait could be seen by a critical investigation that an elegant country-seat, a splendid equipage, the luxuries of the world, and a beautiful female were all, in his estimation, of *equal* and indispensable importance to administer to the pleasures of man; and that, when this was done, they had fulfilled their destiny. Such is the selfish and artlessly-artful Francis Fisher.

We have not detained this little party that the reader might gaze upon their portraits. They are waiting for their friends. And as Fitzwalter has just handed Cofa and Constance and Gertrude into a carriage, and a basket of provision with the same watchful care which he bestowed upon them, and is now in himself and satisfied that all is ready, he motions to them to lead, and that the carriage will follow after. This afternoon is to be passed in the enjoyment of what is called a picnic in some distant forest. The reader must not suppose from this sentence that he is now going to be introduced to all the pretty girls in the country. In fact, this is not a picnic according to the legitimate meaning of the word.

They had not proceeded far till Fisher succeeded in separating Matilda from the rest of the company; and as they loitered along together, he embraced the opportunity to express more freely than he had ever done

before his views upon a subject of vital interest to the lady.

"I am very sorry to perceive," said he, "that you continue to encourage the attentions of Harrie Clifton, when you are so well aware that it is not only unpleasant to your family, but plainly and positively a disparagement to your own character."

"Anything more?" replied his companion, in an accent which plainly intimated that all she had heard was scarcely worth a rejoinder.

"Yes. I wish to add," continued the youth, "that you should have more self-respect, more personal dignity, more regard for your position in society than to entertain for one moment the repulsive idea of seriously receiving his advances."

"Why not? He is a very pleasant companion," said Miss Seymour.

"But who is he? There is the question! My God, Matilda! who is Harrie Clifton?"

"You introduced him to the family," said the lady.

"I never introduced him! I merely tolerated his vulgar presence that he might explain to you the reason why he was loafing and lounging about the woods. And now to presume upon that privilege to visit you! Oh, the vagabond! the incomprehensible, the impudent vagabond!"

"Hush! I will not permit such language! He is a coward who will say behind another's back what he dare not say to his face!"

"Oh, Matilda! Matilda! bring me one man or one woman whose reputation is unquestionable who will say from long acquaintance with him that Harrie

Clifton is a gentleman, and I'll submit! Now, is not that a fair proposition? But you cannot do it! You do not know him! Yet in the face of all this you are about to commit a moral suicide!"

"I deny it!" rejoined the lady, proudly. "My feelings are not so deeply engaged in this matter that reason can have no influence over me! Prove to me that your charges against him are correct, and I will show the world that the heart of Matilda Seymour is governed by a *will* which no man can bend from the high purpose of her nature!"

"Now, indeed, my dear girl, you talk like yourself," said Fisher, in a bland and soothing manner. "And now, while it is not too late, let me beg your pardon, let me solicit your entire forgiveness, for being in any way instrumental in the presentation of that poor unfortunate stranger to your family. Why, if such things were permitted it would break down all the safeguards of society! It would let loose a host of adventurers who would pollute the whole atmosphere of social life. It makes me shudder when I think of it,—that I was so credulous as to receive his own testimony as sufficient evidence that he is a man of good standing and character!"

"Well, it may all be premature," said the Beauty, "but Harrie Clifton has won my esteem, and I cannot and will not recall it till I have a better reason for doing so than the bare probability that he is unworthy of it."

"Exactly so, my dear child," said Francis. "I like to hear you talk so. 'Tis my nature to be benevolent, to be kind, to be charitable. But at the same

time you will acknowledge the propriety, ay, the paramount necessity, of a thorough investigation into his whole history. Will you not, Matilda?"

"Certainly. I should like to know all about him."

"Well, now I believe we understand each other," said Fisher: "that I shall make it my duty to know who he is, and that you shall make it a duty, which you owe to yourself, your family, and even to your God, to withhold your affection till that knowledge is obtained. Do you sanction the proposal?"

"Yes; provided you are not too long about it."

"Ah, Matilda! I fear—I greatly fear—that you have been inoculated by the poison of love, which, like its prototype, renders the system insensible to a like disease ever afterwards."

"I thank you for the interest which you manifest in my welfare," said the lady; "but you need not be alarmed at my condition. There is an antidote for every poison in this world."

Francis Fisher appeared to be tolerably well satisfied with the concessions of his fair companion. He considered it would be an act of justice to her, a gratification to her family, and a great advantage to himself to find out as soon as possible the weak points in Clifton's character. And where is the man who has not some blemish that casts a shadow over the brightness of his soul? In this was centred all the hopes of the wealthy rival. But where had the recluse passed his early days? Who was ever acquainted with him? Do we positively know his real name? These are questions which no one could answer but himself. Whether he had in confidence, through some unknown

channel, disclosed anything to Matilda, could not be ascertained. But it was strongly suspected by her friends that she knew nothing, and was the victim of an unconquerable infatuation. This, of course, produced a feeling of painful suspense among her relatives. But what was the state of mind with which Francis Fisher contemplated the loss of her who was the idol of his heart, the first and only one who had ever swayed with an indomitable power every pulsation of his vitality?

How many youthful beings, not controlled by moral sentiment, in his position have committed suicide! How many, in an hour of hopeless despondency, have struck down their rivals by an act of cold-blooded murder! What, then, will be the first movement of this unsuccessful love? Look upon his features; how hopeless is the hope which is written there,—that he can ever find an error in Clifton's life, as he is a stranger among strangers. Now mark the glare of that restless eye as it becomes fixed upon Matilda, as if fearful that she can read the dark and portentous thought which at that moment flashed and lightened and scorched through his soul.

But enough of this: the day is beautiful and calm, and the scenery around is alive with the voice of gladness, and why should the spirit of man be sad, when everything about him breathes an inspiration of pure and peaceful joy?

The destination of this little party of pleasure was a lofty and somewhat celebrated hill on the Red Clay, about three or four miles above their own residence.. As there was no road leading directly to it, it was

necessary to pass around the valleys on either side, and at some distance from the stream.

This day they had selected the eastern route, and the fourth turn in their angular road was passed before Fisher and Miss Seymour joined the rest of the company. And now, after descending a long and tedious hill, they are entering a stony and level pass between a deeply-embosomed lake and a steep declivity, whose wooded side is piled with crags of rocks even to its high summit. Just at this moment occurred a trifling incident, which had such an important influence in after-days in effecting a change in the prospects of our hero that we will mention the circumstances. It was like a single spark of fire which feeds unseen on a little fibre of straw in the evening, but ere the night has passed is devouring a whole city. A small fragment of granite, loosened by some animal, or other cause, came bounding down the hill, and so alarmed the young and half-broken steed on which Fisher rode that he sprang forward in full flight and uncontrollable. On a clear course this would have been but a matter of amusement. But not so in a place like this. About a hundred yards in advance the road descends abruptly and crosses the stream, and here the horse, unfortunately, stumbled so suddenly as to pitch his rider on the broad of his back into the midst of the current. The rest of the party pushed on as rapidly as possible, and came in view of the disaster just as the youth arose to his feet, and they saw him stamp out of the creek so savagely and with such striking gestures, that it was plainly apparent that he gave the poor water a seaman's blessing for being in his way at that unpropitious

moment. As soon as it was ascertained that he had received no permanent injury, the excited feelings of the ladies broke forth into unrestrained laughter. The salute was returned by Fisher by a lowering of the brow, a quivering of the lip, and a sullen silence, which clearly indicated that what was amusement to them was discord to his distracted heart.

When all had joined him, of course much sympathy was expressed, and many plans suggested for his comfort. The most obvious thing for him to do was to return home. This he declined doing. As soon as Clifton succeeded in catching and bringing back the frightened horse, Fisher mounted and proceeded on, notwithstanding his uncomfortable condition. To say that he was wet conveys but a faint idea of his appearance. In fact, everything on him was unstarched and lay flat, like the scalded feathers on a dead chicken. As he dripped along with the snappish gravity of a surly dog, the ladies could not suppress an occasional smile at this blending of the serious with the ludicrous. In justice to him, however, we must say, had this affair happened before Harrie Clifton became the reigning favorite, not one among them would have enjoyed the mishap more than Francis Fisher.

They continued without further interruption, and did not again halt till they arrived at the summit of Mount Cuba. The first half-hour was now passed, after they had assembled together, in pointing out to Matilda and Constance, who had never been there before, all the attractive features of that delightful prospect.

Towards the south the Red Clay could be distinctly seen winding among wooded hills for miles away, till it

was lost in a more level and continuous display of forest ; and beyond it, along the horizon, spread for leagues in extent the noble Delaware ; before them a river of bright and sparkling water, and yonder, as it seemed to touch the sky, broadening into a bay so wide that they appeared to be looking out upon a shoreless ocean. Towards the north, the ground descended into a deep, dark, and encircling valley, and then rising into hills over hills, it piled a mountainous landscape, far against the clouds, in another State of the Union.

There is on the eastern side of this hill, and about half-way from the summit to the stream, two large rocks standing perpendicular and at right angles to the descent, and of such enormous size that they form the most remarkable feature in the local scenery of the place. Here the little party, after a tiresome ramble, gradually collected together, not only to rest, but to enjoy the very welcome refreshments prepared for the occasion. But they soon discovered that it would not do to remain any longer on the hill. The accident to Francis Fisher made his company unpleasant, and positively disagreeable. Hence they concluded to deny themselves the anticipated pleasure of beholding a sunset reflected from the snowy sails on the distant river, and to return home without a moment's delay.

When they arrived at the carriage, Fisher was invited to ride in it, as he would be less exposed to the wind, which was gradually increasing as the sun approached the horizon. But he declined it with a sullen reserve, and stated that he intended to leave them at the first convenient road and take the nearest route to his own home.



What appeared a very unamiable feature in his mind, and vexed even the ladies, was the fact that he would not go while they remained on the hill, although his unpleasant physical condition rendered it nearly impossible for him to enjoy their society or be agreeable to them.

Soon after leaving the slopes of "Cuba," and ere you begin to wind out of the deep valley at its base in your downward course, you strike a road which leads off to the west along the side of a steep and shaded hill. Here Francis Fisher bade the party adieu, and, turning off at a gallop, he laid on the whip as he exclaimed exultingly to himself, "Now for the nearest tavern! And if ever a poor devil had a better excuse for a good drink he ought to have a barrel!"

The route which he had selected rises so gently for nearly half a mile that there is not in the whole country a more beautiful track for a lively and exhilarating dash on a good horse. Of course, at the speed which he now moved, this was soon passed, and scarcely five minutes elapsed till he was out on a more public road which leads off to the northwest. Up this, over the run, over the stones, up the high hill he bounded on, as if all was a level path before him, till at last he reined up in front of an old tavern. The building had the appearance of having been erected on purpose to catch travellers. It was long and low, and protruded one end nearly into the road, making the way very narrow, as if determined to prevent more than one carriage at a time from slipping off in that direction. And it had a sign creaking by this pass, which had something so "pleasant" about it that you are expected

to be taken in by a good idea if you cannot be headed off. And then in front of the dwelling there was such a fine open roadstead, that you are strongly tempted to luff up against a head-wind (qualms of conscience) and come into the harbor under a press of canvas.

When Fisher entered the bar-room his attention became riveted on a being who was crouched upon a low seat in one corner of the apartment. The individual was dressed in black cloth of the best quality, but now so worn and threadbare that he seemed a gentleman in rags. Long black hair, enormous whiskers, and a bushy moustache nearly concealed his face, while an old slouched wool hat, which looked as if it had been kicked till every rib in it was broken and it could be kneaded into any shape, was literally smashed down over his eyes, and nearly hid them, but they glared out, two dark fiery orbs, restless and active, as though they saw everything yet would not themselves be seen.

After this survey, which lasted probably five minutes, our friend turned to the bar and muttered, "Pale brandy." A bottle was set before him; he poured the liquid with a hurried carelessness, drank it rapidly, and then walked the floor. Then thrusting a hand into his pocket, he took out a roll of bank-notes, opened them, growled something about water and women, and then spread them on an old table to dry within a few feet of the mysterious stranger, and again resumed his walk, keeping a cautious but scarcely a perceptible glance on his money. A dozen times he paced the room, while his countenance indicated the stretching to their greatest tenseness the cords that bound to

virtue a suffering and lacerated heart. And now once more he leans upon the bar, and mixes his liquor so slowly that his mind appears to have no control over his hand ; but burning, withering thoughts seem to hold a mastery over his being.

Again he drinks,—turns to the table ; the stranger is gone, but the money is undisturbed. He throws himself in a chair, and, with head back and arms folded, became absorbed in a deep revery.

The dark-looking being who glided out of the room so noiseless and unnoticed was now talking with a boy at the pump about the qualities of Fisher's young and spirited horse, and by mixing careless and coarse remarks about its master, he soon learned the direction of his residence and the road leading to it. Then naturally changing the conversation to the appearance of the weather and the lateness of the hour, he sauntered away leisurely at first, and then more rapidly down the road.

Twilight, with its single star of radiant beauty, was just beginning to blend its loveliness with the deeper and more sombre hues of night when Francis Fisher, issuing from the old dwelling, mounted his horse and proceeded quietly homewards. As he rode along he seemed to be more composed, as though his mind had settled on some plan capable of yielding a victory over his adverse fortune. In this dreamy and thoughtless mood the first mile was passed nearly unconscious of his position ; and now, as he was descending a hill along the side of the first woods on his way, suddenly a dark form arose from behind a small cedar near an old lime-kiln, and before he had time to raise his whip

a pistol was presented, with the sharp, imperative command,—

“Deliver!”

“To whom?” said Fisher, in a voice as firm and unshaken as the other’s.

“Come, sir, no fooling! Your life or money!” sternly rejoined the robber.

“To it you are welcome. Put up your weapon. I carry no means of defence,” replied the youth, as he handed over his roll of notes.

“The watch and chain, sir!”

“Never mind it, sir. Only silver and of little value. Never mind it.”

“Liar! ’Tis gold. Pass it over.”

“Ay! I thought I knew you! We, I guess, have met before,—at the tavern?” said Fisher, as he delivered the watch.

“Don’t trouble yourself, sir, to remember when you were a fool,” replied the outlaw.

“See here, my brave fellow. Listen to me. Would you be willing to transact a little business for a heavy purse?” whispered Francis, so low it seemed he feared the very trees might hear and understand him.

“Anything for money,” was the prompt answer.

“That you shall have in abundance if you possess the ability and tact to serve me.”

“What would you have me do? Speak it! I’ll name the price.”

“Well, sir, here it is. I want you to engage in a little sport. Only a little sport, sir. We must not call it by any harsher name,” said Fisher, looking stealthily all around him.

"Well, what is it?"

"I merely wish you to stain the character of a certain man a little; only a little, sir. He stands so high in the estimation of a certain person that I think it would be doing her and her friends an act of kindness to sully his reputation in some way."

"And what do you expect to gain by it?" asked the robber.

"Well, sir, I suppose you will have to know it, and therefore I might as well confess the truth at once. He is my rival, and if he was out of the way, or so disgraced that it would amount to the same thing, I could marry the lady without a shadow of doubt. I am certain of this fact. I have the very best reason to know that if he had never crossed my path I could succeed."

"Ah, I see it, sir! I see it! He has done you a terrible injury. You must give him thunder and lightning and hail and storm for it. You must crush him out, plough him out, burn him out, if there is no other way to defeat him. Now what will you give me to finish up the business for you in style?" said the robber.

"One hundred dollars at the beginning, and five hundred at the conclusion of the contract," said Fisher.

"Angels of mercy!" exclaimed the outlaw, "what an open; what a noble soul you must have! You would really give six hundred dollars for the girl that you love with all your heart! Some people would give ten thousand—ay, twice ten thousand if they had 'it—for their lady-love. But they are foolish, I suppose. They don't know the value of human flesh as well as

you. You gave, doubtless, three hundred and fifty for that noble horse you ride. And you really think your little sweetheart is worth nearly—but not quite—twice as much! And you ask me to do the vilest, meanest, lowest, blackest piece of villainy that was ever concocted in the brain of a devil for six hundred dollars! And when the deed is done you will take the girl and I the money, and the devil shall register in his book the fulfilment of the contract. Out! out! you low-lived puppy! To think that I would destroy a man for a sum so trifling!”

“I do not ask you, sir, to injure him personally,” said Fisher; “I merely want you to——”

“To blacken his character! I understand you! And don’t you think *that* a thousand times worse than to blow his brains out?” said the robber.

“No, no; I reckon not.”

“You reckon not! Why, sir, where did you get your religion? Not out of the Bible, nor out of Shakspeare either, nor even out of the spelling-book, or you would have known the difference between light and darkness. Now, sir, don’t you believe this passage,—‘He that steals my purse steals trash, but he that filches from me my good name takes that which not enriches him, but makes me poor indeed’? Ten years ago,” continued the robber, “I—yes, I lost my good name, and God only knows how hard I have tried to get it back again. But I cannot do it. The world won’t let me have it. When I try to make a living in an honest way the people shrug their shoulders and whisper and cast sidelong glances at me as if I was a rabid dog, and say, ‘What! you do not trust

*him?* He was an outlaw! Have nothing to do with him! How, then, can I make a living? I must have money! I cannot starve! Ten thousand times have the words of our old minister rung through my ears,—‘The ways of the transgressor are hard!’ I know it! I know its burning truth! I must rob or die! Money, money, I *must* have! I cannot live without it! Yet notwithstanding this, if I had now ten thousand dollars in solid gold I would give every cent of it for that peace of mind which I possessed when a beardless boy. But oh, my God! it will never come again! Yet to this condition you want to reduce your rival.”

“I do not want you to murder him,” said Fisher, “nor to ruin his reputation entirely. I merely want you to cripple the wing of his character just enough to bring him down to the decent level where all such poor trash belong.”

“Very well, sir,” said the robber, “I understand you. You want him brought down to the situation which I now occupy in the opinion of the world. Let us see what will do this: burn down all his buildings, poison his horses and cattle, sprinkle his farm with the seeds of the Sodom apple and the Canada thistle till nothing will grow but them, mix drugs with his liquor till every glass shall sicken him, sell him dogs for lambs, and pollute the bread and salt of his life till he has a loathing disgust for all food, and find out the wells and springs that yield him water and keep poison dissolved in them till his blood is a festering pool of disease. Do this and more, till you make him bankrupt in pocket and a living, suffering, sickening, dying skeleton, and what does it all amount to? What in-

jury, what calamity, has fallen upon him? Anything compared to the loss of a good name? Leave him *that*, and you leave him almost everything. His friends will gather round him, and sympathize with him, his creditors will pity him, the world will trust him, God will love him, his wife, his children, will respect him, and he will arise upon his feet, and his troubles shall pass away. But, oh, my God! not so, *not so!* if his good name has become a byword of shame and a mockery and a stigma upon the earth! Now, sir, is not this all true? You cannot deny it. Now you may form some idea of the work which you want me to do. You may see it's a great undertaking. And more, that you must pay well for it if you get it done. Give me one hundred dollars to-night, four hundred when the business is fairly under way, and five thousand when the object is accomplished. What do you say to that, my good fellow?"

"Too much entirely," said Fisher.

"Too much!" exclaimed the outlaw. "Suppose you that I am a fool? Do you think I can work for nothing? Am I to spend months, and it may be a whole year in your service, and do what will be worth to you probably ten times that amount, for nothing? Five hundred dollars! Why, sir, that would not last us more than a single month. And how are you going to break the back of a man's character without time and money? Wouldn't I have to drink with him, to gamble with him, ride with him, and lead him cautiously and slowly into the dens of vice, till his self-respect was gone? And then by the maddening influence of the bowl, overcome his self-



government forever. Then the poor victim would receive his sentence from the world, and they would never change it."

"You need not talk that way," said Fisher. "You cannot reach Harrie Clifton in that manner. He is as solid as a rock. He is nailed down to virtue, and the nails are all clinched on the under side. He is a fixed fact. All the enticements of the city cannot allure or undermine him."

"Then how are we going to ruin him?" said the robber. "The very first thing to do is to break down his own self-respect, and then gradually weaken his self-government. Now neither of these can be done unless you can get him to drinking and into bad company. I know this to be a fact. I have seen many young men resist every temptation with an iron will till we got them fond of liquor, and then we lead them on to other vices as easily as the butcher leads the lamb to the slaughter."

"I know it," said Fisher. "And that is the reason you need not try him in that way. But let me tell you what you can do. You can tell a disparaging falsehood about him. And then another and another, each one a little stronger, till we sully his reputation."

"But will the lady," said the outlaw, "be such a credulous little fool as to believe them?"

"Oh, yes; if you only manage the thing in the right way," said Fisher. "Only make everything about it so plain, so plausible that everybody else will believe it, and then she will soon come over."

"What way would you go about it?" inquired the robber. "Hadn't I better blow his brains out at

once and be done with him? That is the surest way to get clear of a troublesome fellow. It would not be any more wicked than to blacken his name forever."

"Oh, that won't do! that won't do!" exclaimed Fisher. "If you were to kill him the lady would drown herself or go crazy, or get melancholy and dwindle away, and never be of any use to anybody, and that would be of no advantage to me. No, sir, I tell you there is but one way by which we can accomplish anything. We must melt down his character slowly and let her gradually drop him. I cannot think of any plan at present, but let us make an appointment to meet here to-night at twelve o'clock by this old lime-kiln. In the mean time I'll go home and get my supper and get some dry clothes on, and we will think over this matter."

"Very well; I agree to that," said the outlaw; "but don't spread your money out to dry before strangers."

"Ah! ha!" said Fisher, "I see you did not understand the movement. The very moment I saw you at the tavern it flashed upon my mind that you were an outlaw, and could be of use to me could I only gain your confidence. Now, how was that to be accomplished? It could not be done there. You would have distrusted my motive had I made the least advance towards you or the most remote allusion to this subject. I wanted to bring you out, and had no other way but to lay a trap for you; and didn't I do it, and didn't I succeed pretty well?"

"Yes, indeed, you did. But why did you show so much agitation at the time? I thought you were most desperately frightened, or in a most devilish bad humor

about something. Your lips quivered and your hand trembled, and, in fact, your whole body shook so much you could hardly drink your liquor."

"Ay, that was a struggle," said Fisher, "between that little spicy jade called conscience and the devil whether to employ you in this business or not."

"Your nerves are weak, my boy," said the outlaw. "A few nights with us would soon dull the edge of that old moral hatchet."

"And yet," said Francis, "I presume, from your choice of words and your manner in conversation, that *you* have seen better days."

"Many of them—in my youth."

"Had wealthy parents probably?"

"Yes,—and very respectable."

"And you ruined them?"

"Ruined them! They ruined me!" exclaimed the robber.

"How?"

"How? Why, sir, by making a fool of their only child."

"In what manner?"

"By bringing me up to idleness, and instilling into me a contempt for honest labor."

"That was a great misfortune. But I must leave you now. Remember we meet here at midnight, by this old lime-kiln."

"Ay, ay, I'll not forget it, Mr. Francis Fisher."

"How in the name of thunder and lightning did you know my name? Very well, let it pass. What name do you bear?"

"Call me Logan."



"Well, then, what does the poet say that is more applicable to your remark?"

"Why, he says,—

"'Ay free, aff han' your story tell,  
When wi' a bosom crony ;  
But still keep something to yoursel  
Ye scarcely tell to ony.  
Conceal yoursel as weel's you can  
Frae critical dissection ;  
But keek thro' ev'ry other man,  
Wi' sharpen'd sly inspection.'

Now, Matilda, you see that verse has a very different meaning from your quotation."

"Yes ; but how do I know that it is any more appropriate to the case than mine? Unless you will permit Cora to finish the sentence, and tell me precisely what she was going to say, I am entitled to the presumption that my selection is more applicable than yours. Now, you see, my dear Cora, you are under obligations to both of us, and you must bring your remark to a conclusion."

"Indeed, she shall not do it !" said Gertrude. "It does not concern anybody but myself, and I am not going to have my peculiarities pasted up like an advertisement for everybody to read and criticise."

"By the by," said Cora, wishing to change the conversation, "talking of eating reminds me of our picnic. What have you done to poor Fisher that he has not made his appearance to-day? Yesterday we could not expect him. But forty-eight hours is certainly long enough to get over a trifling accident."

"I know not, nor care not, what keeps him away," replied Matilda.

"Francis was very rough and surly," said Blanche, as they walked into the parlor; "but we should make some allowance for him. It would irritate the feelings of any gentleman to be laughed at under similar circumstances."

"I cannot agree with you," rejoined Matilda. "If his mind was under the control of proper moral culture he would have behaved very differently."

"Very likely he would," said Cora; "but did we manifest a high moral culture by laughing at him so immoderately?"

"Well, we went out for a little amusement, and we had it unexpectedly at his expense," said the Beauty, throwing herself carelessly on the sofa, with one foot under her, which increased her height.

"I very much fear that he has lessened his prospects," said Cora, "by that very unfortunate occurrence. Yet it was impossible for him to help it. What a pity that the horse threw him! I do wish he would be more careful of himself, if only for Matilda's sake, and not ride such a wild animal. I have felt very uneasy ever since we parted with him. I am afraid that something else has happened to him."

"Don't trouble yourself, my dear Cora," said Matilda, "about Francis Fisher. If the truth was known, I think we would find him at home just as contented and happy as we are here, and with all his hopes just as bright as ever. I say this because I now know him so well. He is the most sanguine youth I ever knew. Nothing will or can discourage him."

"Indeed," exclaimed Cora, "I don't think he has any cause to be discouraged! If Harrie Clifton had never entered this house you would have been Matilda Fisher before another year could open on us. You need not deny this, my dear; because your family were in favor of it, and still are, if I am not mistaken."

"Then you really think that I must be governed by my family in this matter. For my part, I do not think so. My firm conviction is that parents have an undoubted right, in fact, it is their duty to prevent an unwise and imprudent marriage, but not to compel a daughter to enter into one against her will. Now you see, I grant, or rather concede, to them the power to prevent me from marrying Francis Fisher or any other man, but not to make a match for me, for that I will never brook."

"But, Matilda, you could certainly be persuaded if wealth and station and family and friends all pronounced it a safe and prudent course to follow."

"Well, I suppose it is foolish for me to say what I would do under every circumstance which could happen, but——"

"Miss Seymour," said Fitzwalter, as he entered the room and walked up to the front window, "can you tell me who is in yonder carriage?" pointing to a vehicle descending a road on the opposite side of the stream.

"My dear brother, I do believe!" exclaimed the lady, as she caught a glimpse of a gentleman looking out of the carriage window. "If he is coming to take me home——"

"Now, Matilda," said Constance, "be very cautious

how you talk to Julius. Should he return without us, and give an unfavorable report of your flirtation with Clifton, it will make them very unhappy at home."

"Flirtation!" exclaimed Matilda, with an indignant frown that repelled with horror the imputation.

"Yes," said the sister; "in no other light can we regard your intimacy with that unmannerly fellow."

"*Unmannerly!*" said Matilda, in a tone that broke the word into fragments and threw the splinters back in her face.

"Yes, *unmannerly!*" cried Constance. "What right has he to intrude upon this family? What right has he to disturb the harmony of our social intercourse? What right has he to your company? And what right have you to give him the least, the most distant encouragement?"

"What do you mean, my dear sister? What object have you in view in talking to me in that manner?" said the Beauty. "Is there nothing can occupy your thoughts but love and matrimony and Harrie Clifton? I am sick of hearing such nonsense! I despise such eternal wrangling about personal matters! Yet it's almost the burden of everything you utter. It fills every letter you write home. It's the last thing that I hear at night; it's the first thing that falls upon my ear in the morning. Every walk in the woods, every sail upon the lake, every ride in the carriage is disturbed and rendered unpleasant by contemptuous sneers, disdainful looks, unfeeling taunts, and scornful expressions at the bare mention of the recluse. I do detest, I abhor such trifling. Am I an idiot that I need a keeper? Am I a culprit that I need a jailer?"



The carriage was soon at the door, and a young gentleman handsomely featured, figured, whiskered, combed, and dressed was affectionately received by his sisters, and politely welcomed by the ladies of the glen. Scarcely an hour passed till Julius and Matilda were alone together walking in the large garden in the rear of the dwelling, and engaged in earnest conversation.

"Are you positively certain," said the brother, "that Harrie Clifton is at this present time a single man? Is it not probable that he has a wife now living, and that he has deserted her because he is too lazy and too indolent to keep her? These are grave questions, my dear sister, and you should be able to answer them to our satisfaction before keeping his company."

"You have only to know him," rejoined the lady, "to be convinced that he is, in a moral view, every thing that you could wish."

"If you love him, my dear sister, it is quite natural that you should entertain such an opinion. I've seen some of the most ill-shapen, hard-featured, and immoral persons the objects of woman's love, and there is no doubt but they regarded them as good-looking, and in morals quite an example to their neighbors. There is no trusting the judgment of a woman, when once in love, respecting the merits of her favorite. You know that it is an acknowledged fact that love blinds the eye. Pause now, I beg you, and look before you take another step forward. It may soon be too late. I hope you will be governed by those rational considerations which control every one who is not an idiot when preparing to change his or her condition in

The following table shows the results of the survey conducted in the year 1998. The data is presented in a tabular format, with columns representing different categories and rows representing specific data points. The table is organized into two main sections: 'General Information' and 'Detailed Data'. The 'General Information' section includes details about the survey itself, while the 'Detailed Data' section provides a breakdown of the results by region and demographic group.

| Category                         | Region A            | Region B            | Region C            | Region D            | Region E            |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Population                       | 1,200,000           | 950,000             | 1,100,000           | 800,000             | 1,300,000           |
| GDP (USD)                        | \$150,000,000       | \$120,000,000       | \$140,000,000       | \$100,000,000       | \$160,000,000       |
| Unemployment Rate (%)            | 12.5                | 10.8                | 11.2                | 9.5                 | 13.1                |
| Healthcare Expenditure (USD)     | \$20,000,000        | \$18,000,000        | \$19,000,000        | \$15,000,000        | \$22,000,000        |
| Education Expenditure (USD)      | \$15,000,000        | \$14,000,000        | \$16,000,000        | \$12,000,000        | \$17,000,000        |
| Infrastructure Development (USD) | \$10,000,000        | \$9,000,000         | \$11,000,000        | \$8,000,000         | \$12,000,000        |
| Environmental Protection (USD)   | \$5,000,000         | \$4,500,000         | \$5,500,000         | \$4,000,000         | \$6,000,000         |
| Social Services (USD)            | \$8,000,000         | \$7,500,000         | \$8,500,000         | \$6,500,000         | \$9,000,000         |
| Public Safety (USD)              | \$3,000,000         | \$2,800,000         | \$3,200,000         | \$2,500,000         | \$3,500,000         |
| Transportation (USD)             | \$4,000,000         | \$3,800,000         | \$4,200,000         | \$3,500,000         | \$4,500,000         |
| Energy (USD)                     | \$2,000,000         | \$1,900,000         | \$2,100,000         | \$1,800,000         | \$2,200,000         |
| Water Supply (USD)               | \$1,500,000         | \$1,400,000         | \$1,600,000         | \$1,300,000         | \$1,700,000         |
| Waste Management (USD)           | \$1,000,000         | \$950,000           | \$1,050,000         | \$900,000           | \$1,100,000         |
| Urban Planning (USD)             | \$0.5,000,000       | \$0.4,500,000       | \$0.5,500,000       | \$0.4,000,000       | \$0.6,000,000       |
| Public Housing (USD)             | \$0.8,000,000       | \$0.7,500,000       | \$0.8,500,000       | \$0.7,000,000       | \$0.9,000,000       |
| Community Development (USD)      | \$0.3,000,000       | \$0.2,800,000       | \$0.3,200,000       | \$0.2,500,000       | \$0.3,500,000       |
| Arts and Culture (USD)           | \$0.2,000,000       | \$0.1,900,000       | \$0.2,100,000       | \$0.1,800,000       | \$0.2,200,000       |
| Recreation (USD)                 | \$0.1,000,000       | \$0.0,950,000       | \$0.1,050,000       | \$0.0,900,000       | \$0.1,100,000       |
| Public Works (USD)               | \$0.4,000,000       | \$0.3,800,000       | \$0.4,200,000       | \$0.3,500,000       | \$0.4,500,000       |
| Public Utilities (USD)           | \$0.6,000,000       | \$0.5,800,000       | \$0.6,200,000       | \$0.5,500,000       | \$0.6,500,000       |
| Public Safety (USD)              | \$0.3,000,000       | \$0.2,800,000       | \$0.3,200,000       | \$0.2,500,000       | \$0.3,500,000       |
| Public Services (USD)            | \$0.2,000,000       | \$0.1,900,000       | \$0.2,100,000       | \$0.1,800,000       | \$0.2,200,000       |
| Public Works (USD)               | \$0.1,000,000       | \$0.0,950,000       | \$0.1,050,000       | \$0.0,900,000       | \$0.1,100,000       |
| Public Utilities (USD)           | \$0.0,500,000       | \$0.0,450,000       | \$0.0,550,000       | \$0.0,400,000       | \$0.0,600,000       |
| Public Safety (USD)              | \$0.0,300,000       | \$0.0,280,000       | \$0.0,320,000       | \$0.0,250,000       | \$0.0,350,000       |
| Public Services (USD)            | \$0.0,200,000       | \$0.0,190,000       | \$0.0,210,000       | \$0.0,180,000       | \$0.0,220,000       |
| Public Works (USD)               | \$0.0,100,000       | \$0.0,0,950,000     | \$0.0,1,050,000     | \$0.0,0,900,000     | \$0.0,1,100,000     |
| Public Utilities (USD)           | \$0.0,0,500,000     | \$0.0,0,450,000     | \$0.0,0,550,000     | \$0.0,0,400,000     | \$0.0,0,600,000     |
| Public Safety (USD)              | \$0.0,0,300,000     | \$0.0,0,280,000     | \$0.0,0,320,000     | \$0.0,0,250,000     | \$0.0,0,350,000     |
| Public Services (USD)            | \$0.0,0,200,000     | \$0.0,0,190,000     | \$0.0,0,210,000     | \$0.0,0,180,000     | \$0.0,0,220,000     |
| Public Works (USD)               | \$0.0,0,100,000     | \$0.0,0,0,950,000   | \$0.0,0,1,050,000   | \$0.0,0,0,900,000   | \$0.0,0,1,100,000   |
| Public Utilities (USD)           | \$0.0,0,0,500,000   | \$0.0,0,0,450,000   | \$0.0,0,0,550,000   | \$0.0,0,0,400,000   | \$0.0,0,0,600,000   |
| Public Safety (USD)              | \$0.0,0,0,300,000   | \$0.0,0,0,280,000   | \$0.0,0,0,320,000   | \$0.0,0,0,250,000   | \$0.0,0,0,350,000   |
| Public Services (USD)            | \$0.0,0,0,200,000   | \$0.0,0,0,190,000   | \$0.0,0,0,210,000   | \$0.0,0,0,180,000   | \$0.0,0,0,220,000   |
| Public Works (USD)               | \$0.0,0,0,100,000   | \$0.0,0,0,0,950,000 | \$0.0,0,0,1,050,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,900,000 | \$0.0,0,0,1,100,000 |
| Public Utilities (USD)           | \$0.0,0,0,0,500,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,450,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,550,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,400,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,600,000 |
| Public Safety (USD)              | \$0.0,0,0,0,300,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,280,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,320,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,250,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,350,000 |
| Public Services (USD)            | \$0.0,0,0,0,200,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,190,000 | \$0.0,0,0,0,210,000 | \$0                 |                     |

"Oh, what a heartless critic on poor human nature!" replied Matilda.

"You see, my dear," continued Julius, "money is everything in a business so expensive as matrimony."

"The vanity of the world has made it so," said the Beauty.

"The cause has nothing to do with it," replied Julius; "the fact that it is so is sufficient, and you cannot alter it. If you choose poverty and obscurity in preference to wealth and a glorious career among your equals, I hope the sad and gloomy hour may never come when you will regret it with a crushed, agonized, and bleeding heart! For then, oh, my sister, it will be too late to mourn! Tears and prayers and remorse cannot alter your inevitable doom. You know not human weakness. There is not one in ten thousand whose spiritual and moral nature is sufficiently developed to stand the blighting and withering effects of poverty! While prosperity lasts all may be cheerfulness and love and contentment. But when poverty stamps his iron-shod foot upon the cabin-floor, where is the love that does not sink and cower beneath it, and become a selfish, snarling brute? Yes, *man!* poor, weak, vile, unregenerated, ungodly man! that being the brightest jewel that God could find in his heavenly treasury to bestow upon *you!*—that being who has left her home and all most dear to dwell with *you!*—that being who would peril her life at any moment to save *yours!*—you turn upon and treat like a dog if want but shakes his fetters in your face!"

"There may be," said Matilda, "a few such inhuman monsters, such unnatural, unfeeling, unblushing

tyrants as you describe. But what has that to do with Harrie Clifton? He is just as far above such beings as yon brilliant orb is superior in his light and magnitude to the little fire-fly of a summer evening! With him woman could be happy in the most lowly cottage. With him she would never be made to feel the frowns of adversity. He would never sacrifice his self-respect, his nobility of nature, his Godlike manliness of character so much as to trample upon the confiding and trusting heart of woman!"

"What poetical nonsense!" exclaimed Julius. "Look at the millionaire how he is respected! How he moves through the crowd! How he bends the masses to his will! How he sways the multitude with a whisper! How gorgeous are his entertainments! How magnificent are his gifts of charity! How gloriously he lives! How he is eulogized when he dies! There is something tangible! Something that will endure! Ay, something that might induce a noble woman to submit to the toils and turmoils of ever-harassing matrimony! But what have your poor drones to offer in the place of all this? They offer love! But what is *it*? It has neither weight, nor shape, nor substance! A mere sentiment, which may be changed so easily that you cannot see the breath of air that turns it. The sting of an adder, the kick of a horse, a fall upon the step may send it into eternity! Depend upon it, a man who is willing to live on a crust of bread in a log cabin has no legal nor moral right to ask a refined lady to abandon a comfortable home to share his destiny, with the alarming probability staring her in the face that ere a month is past she may be a

desolate widow, cast upon the cold humanity of a selfish world !”

“We are not certain that Clifton is even poor,” said Matilda.

“You tell me that he is a recluse,” said Julius. “Why is this? Doubtless because he is too poor or too indolent to acquire the means to live in a better condition. Little, indeed, will support him there. And in the name of the living God, my dear sister, do leave him to his cold potatoes !”

“Have patience, my good brother. When you meet with Harrie Clifton you will be agreeably surprised ; you will be delighted to discover that Constance has entirely misrepresented his character.”

“When I meet with him !” exclaimed Julius, with a proud and supercilious air of supreme contempt. “I shall not permit myself to pause one moment in his repulsive presence. I ask no other proof of his standing, his vulgarity of descent, his dishonest motives, than the alarming, startling fact that he intruded himself upon this family without the formality of a regular introduction, and in violation of every principle of social etiquette.”

“’Tis false !” exclaimed Matilda. “He was almost dragged, against his will, into our company. Fisher would listen to no excuse. He had either to visit us and prove his respectability, or leave this part of the country forever. And if there is any one to blame it is Francis Fisher, for being satisfied with his explanation.”

“Never mind, my dear sister. Let us forget the past, and hope it will not cast a cloud upon the future.

Promise me, my precious one, that henceforward you will have nothing to do with him, and——”

“I won’t do it!”

“You won’t do it! Shame, shame on you! Why won’t you do it?”

“Because I like him!”

“You like him! My God, the infatuation of woman is incomprehensible!”

“You haven’t seen him,” said the Beauty.

“Well, well, I see that words are useless,” said Julius. “For the present let us drop the subject.”

Several minutes were now passed in silence, with the exception of an occasional remark on the beauty and extent of the walks in which they were strolling. At last some allusion was made to another prominent figure in the narrative, which brought his merits under discussion.

“Francis Fisher, I understand,” said Julius, “is a gentleman of fortune, and willing and able to spend thousands yearly to make you happy. What have you against him?”

“I don’t admire him,” replied the lady.

“Don’t admire him?” repeated Julius, slowly. “Nonsense! that has nothing to do with the comforts and responsibilities of married life. You could easily and soon learn to think well of him; and if he loves you, a poor tool you would be if you could not lead him by a single hair and mould him to suit your own liking.”

“But, my dear brother, you would not have me to marry a man whom I only respect as a friend?”

“Certainly, if there is no other earthly objection,”

said Julius. "Love is often the growth of years, and the strongest and most durable attachment often begins after marriage. Never let your feelings prevent you from making a good selection, and this can only be done by a prudent exercise of your best reason. If you follow passion and discard reflection in your choice, the day may soon come when you will see your error. Do not suppose, my ever dear sister, that I am anxious to see you married. Very far from it. My great anxiety is, that when you do take such an important step in life, that it shall be your gain and not your irreparable loss."

"Julius," said Matilda, "if there is any one thing in this life that I abhor above all others it is that cold, heartless, calculating selfishness which can sit down with pen and paper and cipher out just how much a man or woman would be worth in wedlock as a pecuniary speculation. Give me a companion, or let me dwell alone and listen to the wisdom of my own thoughts. Give me a *soul* in harmony with my *impas-sioned* nature, or keep them away forever."

"I came down," said Julius, "to put an end to your foolish and disreputable attachment to a poor devil, and I expected, of course, you would listen to the suggestion of reason and the affectionate counsel of a brother. But what do I hear? A confession and repentance! No; not one word like it. But a tirade of romantic nonsense."

"Then will you please to go home," said Matilda, "if you don't like the music?"

"No, I will not," said Julius, stamping upon the gravel-walk. "I'll stay here and defend the reputa-

tion of my family. It shall not be dishonored by an alliance with Poverty."

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## CHAPTER VII.

SEVERAL days after the arrival of Julius Seymour, Francis Fisher made his appearance at the glen-mansion. He seemed reconciled to his fate, or satisfied in his mind that the events of the future were under his control; hence he manifested that quiet contentment we all experience after having arranged some troublesome and vexatious business.

And now with apparent cheerfulness he joined in the hearty laugh awakened by an allusion to the ludicrous figure he presented in the little accident of the past week. And then, by an artful turn in the conversation, as if it was suggested by the subject, he launched off in a strain of the purest and most high-toned morality. He spoke, apparently with much feeling, of the wild and unbridled freedom permitted in the families of the wealthy among their children. The habit of regarding the little boisterous displays of passion among them as a mark of spirit, he said, had spoiled the amiability of many a child, by encouraging an irreverent and forward bearing. Indeed, were we to judge from his language, he most severely censured that roughness and unsocial sullenness of temper which he had manifested on the afternoon of the picnic.



"By the by," he continued, "that reminds me of an instance of the beneficial effect of early training on the mind of youth. About two years ago I happened to visit our county poor-house, and while there I observed many children lounging about and indulging in the use of vulgar and often indecent language. It struck me at once that they were neglected in one of the most important elements of education. I made a strict inquiry, and found it to be the case. I then suggested to the superintendent the advantage and propriety of having the Bible read to them every morning, with occasional admonitions of the great necessity of obeying its divine precepts. Only a few months ago I met this worthy functionary, and he assured me, with a degree of warmth and feeling in his manner which I shall never forget, that my suggestion had been followed, and with a result, apparently, very beneficial."

The ladies expressed their approval of this course by such a kind and conciliating deportment towards the speaker, that Francis Fisher felt perfectly well satisfied that he had regained his former position in their esteem. Therefore, after an hour of lively and cheerful talk, taking advantage of a fair wind in his favor, he bade them adieu with a heart seemingly as light as those he left behind him.

"A very clever fellow after all," said Fitzwalter, as he watched him cantering away on his wild steed in the distance. "I can mention something else in his favor. It is the habit which he follows of having the Scriptures read in his family every morning, and which induced me to adopt that practice."

"Indeed!" said Julius Seymour, coloring a little as

he drew a personal comparison. "He doubtless has a natural turn for piety."

"Not exactly that, either," rejoined Fitzwalter; "he thinks it our duty to pay great respect to religious rites and observances as a necessary example to the ignorant portion of mankind."

"My dear brother," said Cora, "I beg leave to differ with you on that point; it is positively a religious sentiment of his mind which inclines him to do such things, and not merely a conventional policy."

"I think you are mistaken," rejoined Mr. Irving. "In my opinion he has not one single spark of real piety in his heart or mind. This may be an unjust decision, and I hope it is not correct."

"If that is the case, then he is a base and designing hypocrite!" exclaimed Cora.

"There may be some hypocrisy in it," said Fitzwalter, "but there is certainly no baseness, for it is done with a good motive."

"I cannot agree with you," replied Cora. "He ought not to do it unless he felt it to be a *religious* duty, and not a worldly policy."

The conversation was here interrupted by Blanche Irving whispering to Fitzwalter,—

"Where are the keys of the fire-proof, my dear brother?"

"Will you be so kind as to tell me what you want with them?"

"I merely wish to place this little package away for safe-keeping. It was intrusted to me for that purpose."

Mr. Irving took the package and examined it. It

was small and very closely sealed, and endorsed, "Valuable Papers belonging to Francis Fisher."

"I would give five dollars to know what's in it," said Gertrude, as she took the bundle and tried to peep through it.

"So would I," said Cora. "If it belonged to anybody else I would not care half so much about it."

"It is very strange what object he has in view," observed Constance, as she weighed the package on the end of her fingers.

"Pshaw! you talk like a teapot," said Mr. Irving, evidently annoyed by their childish curiosity. "No doubt but some one has given him a bond of considerable value, and he did not wish to carry it with him to some party of amusement where he might be going to to-night."

"Well done!" exclaimed Matilda; "that is another recommendation, most delicately expressed, concerning the very exemplary character of your very particular friend. Where do you suppose he has gone to spend this pleasant evening? We may presume he has not gone to church this time to make a favorable impression upon the community, or to set his poor neighbors a good example."

"Matilda!" exclaimed her brother, "do be more careful how you talk. You must be more respectful in your language, or I cannot let you remain here another day longer. You have no right to cast any insinuations against the moral standing of Francis Fisher."

"If I have said anything calculated to wound the feelings, in the slightest degree, of any one present,"

replied Matilda, "I most humbly beg their pardon. There is not a shadow of doubt but that Francis Fisher is a *very nice* young man. My dear Blanche, did he give you that package just now, before he left the house?"

"Yes; you remember he walked into the dining-room and said that he would help himself to a glass of water, and I accompanied him. When the door was shut he looked round, and observing no one present but me, he drew this from his pocket and asked me to lock it up for him."

"And you promised to do it?"

"Certainly; I see no harm in it."

For the present we will leave the glen-mansion and follow Francis Fisher for the rest of the evening. And, although he did not get into very choice society, the reader will discover after while that he had a very different object in view when he left the package than the fear of losing it in bad company.

About a mile from the residence of Mr. Irving was a new stone tavern on the side of a hill by a public road. Here Fisher alighted, and ordered the hostler to stable and feed his animal. He then entered the dwelling, took a glass of brandy, and requested his supper to be set in a private room, to the exclusion of all others. As this was his usual mode when taking refreshment at this place, it excited no surprise. Never did human being exhibit more restlessness than was displayed by this youth in the solitary chamber awaiting the darkness of night to shield his movements. About every ten minutes he looked at his watch, walked the floor hurriedly, lit a cigar, and the next

moment dashed it out of the window, where the first of a half-dozen was still smoking among the grass of the garden. When supper was ready he ate but little; yet there was one thing which he performed with care, and which he was careful that none should see him do. He cut a large slice of meat and several pieces of bread, and, after wrapping them neatly in paper, put them in his coat-pocket. Then, after nibbling a little cake and sipping a little coffee, till an abundant time had elapsed for him to have taken a substantial meal, that no one should miss with any surprise what he had secreted about him, he knocked, and ordered the table cleared without delay.

When satisfied that the curtains of night were drawn so closely that it could get no darker, he passed stealthily out of the house into the road, and, gliding along to the bottom of the hill, entered a thicket on his left, and followed a path about one hundred yards to a spring,—a fountain of water since celebrated for its medicinal qualities throughout the Union.

Here he paused and listened, the darkness preventing him from seeing anything but the lofty boughs between him and the clouded sky. Then a low whistle saluted him almost at his feet. An answering word from him brought to his side the object of his search.

"Have you seen him?" whispered Fisher, as they took a seat together.

"I want my supper, old fellow, before we come to business."

"Here it is, Logan. If you eat this all you will have no appetite for breakfast," said Francis, handing out the contents of his pocket, as he continued,—

"Are you sure that no one saw you lurking about these woods?"

"Yes, I am sure. Have you any whiskey about you?"

"Whiskey! no! Do you suppose I carry liquor about me as you carry your tobacco?"

"Well, I don't care if you don't. What is that to me? Why didn't you bring me some whiskey? This bread is as dry as an old chip. I say, Fisher, can't you go up to the tavern and bring me down some good old whiskey?"

"No, I'll be hanged if I do! Hush up and don't make so much noise. We don't know who may hear us; don't talk so loud. Have you been drunk ever since you got my money?"

"Drunk! Who in the devil's drunk? Are you drunk? I am not. Who is drunk to-night?"

"Well, never mind that now. I will suppose that we are both sober. Did you see Harrie Clifton?"

"See him? Yes, to be sure I did. How shall I get a drink out of that old barrel? It's a darn queer thing to stick end foremost into a spring."

"Stoop down and drink like a horse."

"Ay, so I did in the daytime, but you can't do so at night: the yellow scum is all over the surface of the water."

"Get a drink the best way you can," said Fisher, impatiently, "and let us settle this affair at once. Did you get a fair opportunity to see Harrie?"

"Yes, sir; and begged a good dinner from him. Saw him half an hour, I reckon."

"Did you fix his countenance, his figure, his general

appearance, so well in your mind that you could swear to his identity in a court of justice?"

"Never fear me, sir; I could pick him out among ten thousand,—yes, twenty years to come I could do it. There is something about him that fixes itself in the memory so that no one could forget him. By my soul, he is a noble-looking fellow! When I asked him for something to eat, he gave it to me as if it were a pleasure to do so. None of your niggardly looks about him. And then when he talks,—my God! you might think he was speaking to his best friends, he is so kind in his way of doing it. I say, Fisher, it's a d—d shame you can't get along without crippling his wing."

"Pshaw, man! he knows a thing or two about getting along in this world. They are great sticklers for morality and propriety and the graces up at Fitzwalter's, and Clifton knows it, and I've not the least doubt but he tries his cunning on every poor dog that he meets. I tell you, sir, all that kindness which he bestowed upon you is artful, and just a rehearsal of what he intends to lavish upon others. I know it, sir. Before he met with Matilda he was as gruff and silent and sober as an old judge."

"What! do you tell me that a man can make a fool of me in that way, by pretending to be what he is not? No, no, my hearty! neither you nor Clifton can fool me."

"Well, well, have it as you please; that has nothing to do with our contract."

"No, sir. But I reckon a man may say what he thinks about another without being called a dog. Do you suppose you are going to lock up my mouth be-

cause you've got a little more money than I have? Confound your upstart impudence! I tell you, I know when a man speaks to me as he speaks to a gentleman. I say it's a petty, it's a cowardly shame that you can't get along by fair means with that fellow."

"Ah! ha! I understand you now, Logan. You've been taking a bribe from him, old fellow. You want to play a double game in this matter."

"Go to thunder with you! Do you think, or will you dare to tell me to my face that I am a fool? No, you don't believe yourself what you say. One look at Clifton would satisfy any one that you could not approach him with any proposition to engage in any of your low, mean, underhanded plots. No, indeed, he has no need of double-dealing to get along. 'Tis said an honest face will carry a man through the world anywhere. And that's what you and I haven't got, have we, Fisher? ha! ha! ha!"

"Logan, you are an insulting puppy, and I am almost sorry that I ever had anything to do with you. If you don't intend to aid me, you can pay me back the money which I have already advanced to you, and there's an end of the matter."

"Pay you back the money!" exclaimed Logan, with a low, broad laugh. "Why, my dear sir, we can't live apart now. We are necessary to each other's salvation."

"Oh, Logan, Logan! would to God that you were in heaven or some other place! You do torment me beyond endurance. You know the terms of our engagement. Will it be necessary for us to meet again before you undertake the business in earnest?"



"No, sir; everything is prepared."

"Be careful, Logan, to remember how he spells his name. It is *Harrie*, and not Harry. This may be of great use to you when you come to be cross-questioned."

"Never fear. I tell you everything is prepared; everything is ready."

"Then would it not be better for you to go now?" said Fisher. "I mean to leave this part of the country before morning."

"Go yourself, old boy! I travel when it suits me, not others."

"Very well, Logan, do as you please. Only be prudent. This affair worries me; would to heaven it were over! When we next meet where shall it be,—here?"

"Yes; until we find another place more convenient; and when your life depends upon it, if you receive but a scrap of paper, and with but one figure on it, come to me precisely at that hour of the night."

"I will; upon the honor of a gentleman I promise to do so," said Francis, as he bade good-evening and walked away.

The robber listened till the tread of his friend was no longer heard in the quiet night, then muttering to himself, repeated,—

"Upon the honor of a *gentleman*! Oh, but that is exquisite! That is beautiful! That surpasses anything I ever saw in art or nature. Upon the honor of a *gentleman*! Well, well, there may be some virtue in it. There may be a little conscience left yet; but if I had a dozen children, and was not too wicked to pray, I

would pray to God with all my heart to save my young ducks from the *honor* of such a gentleman. Oh, better, *better* far be the bride of a bold and daring outlaw than the wife of a hypocrite !”

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## CHAPTER VIII.

THREE long weeks came and passed away at the glen-mansion without a visit from Harrie Clifton. What has become of him? was again and again uttered by every lady of the dwelling, yet no reason could be assigned or known why he came no longer near them. Even Fitzwalter expressed surprise at his absence. There was one, however, who knew, yet told not the cause, and that was Julius Seymour.

Believing it necessary immediately to stop all intimacy between his sister and the recluse, he secretly wrote a letter to Clifton requesting him, in the honored name of her parents, to discontinue his visits, and intimated that Matilda was now fully awakened to the extreme folly of receiving attentions from any one below her own station in life. In fact, the epistle was so carefully, so nicely worded that it had exactly the effect desired. Harrie felt that he could not make even a transient call without doing violence to his own feelings as a man.

Day after day the ladies took their accustomed walk through the forests, yet nowhere could be seen the form of him whose absence was now a painful mystery.

Yet he saw them ; but to allow himself to be seen might have had the appearance of intentional intrusion, hence he avoided them always with scrupulous care.

How different it was with the wealthy rival ! How few were the days that he did not spend one or more hours in their delightful company ! Every ride upon the hills, every sail upon the waters, every ramble through the wild woods found Francis Fisher by the side of Matilda,—now eloquent in the narration of some interesting subject, now pouring forth the noblest sentiments of the heart in the language of some gifted author, and now uttering the deeper feelings of love in the strains of impassioned poetry.

Thus the summer passed away, and autumn had just begun to mingle her crimson and golden leaf with the fading green and sombre foliage of the oak forests, when an incident occurred which shook the social atmosphere in the dwelling of Fitzwalter and produced a sensation never to be forgotten by the fair inhabitants of that delightful abode. The ladies and their attendants, after a morning's ramble, had just assembled in the parlor and become absorbed in the papers of the preceding day. The quietude of the readers lasted but a moment, for scarcely had Mr. Irving glanced over the page before him a single second till he exclaimed,—

“ Gods of Olympus ! What is this ? What does it mean ? Why, this doth amaze me beyond the power of utterance ! ”

These expressions were so unlike the usually sedate and calm manner of Fitzwalter that every one crowded to his side and looked upon the paper. And as they

caught the meaning of the startling paragraph, taking their cue from the first speaker, each uttered opinions and exclamations without reserve.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Matilda. "A falsehood! A conspiracy!"

"Poor, weak, unregenerated man!" said Cora.

"Vile wretch! too miserable to be pitied," rejoined Gertrude.

"Presumptuous impudence! This accounts for his absence!" cried Constance.

"Unfeeling, inhuman traitor to abuse our confidence!" exclaimed Blanche Irving.

"Hang the villain! He must be lynched to-morrow!" shouted Julius Seymour.

"Charity, charity, my good friends! Do not forget that charity is a cardinal virtue, and is ever due from us to fallen and depraved humanity," replied Francis Fisher.

Now, gentle reader, we will look upon the paper ourselves and see what it contains. Why, it is only the announcement of a horrible murder,—a thing of every-day occurrence. But what is this?

"A robber urged by the stings of remorse or some other cause has given himself up, and to save his own life has turned State's evidence, and has named a fellow called Harrie Clifton as their ringleader,—the prime mover and master-plotter of all their schemes of robbery and murder."

The article continued to say,—

"Before this paper goes to press we have no doubt but this desperado will be taken, as his lurking-place has been carefully described to the proper officer;

also an accurate description given of his general appearance, so there can be no reasonable apprehension of failure."

The conversation, which had now become general, and kept up a cross-fire of opinions and recriminations and suggestions, was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who announced the arrival of the sheriff with two subordinates.

"We come," said the officer to Fitzwalter, as he entered the apartment they occupied, "to arrest a person whom we understand is an intruder on your private domain. Can you give us any information of his whereabouts at present?"

"I suppose you allude to Harrie Clifton," said Mr. Irving. "But where he is now I cannot tell you, having no knowledge of his movements. He may be in his cottage, or he may be a thousand miles from it. It is impossible for me to decide. We have not seen him for some time, and hence we presumed that he was absent. This might have been the case, and he may have returned. Your better plan will be to look after him where he generally stays. I mean at his cottage, and about the woods in its vicinity. But let me give you a little advice before you go. There is not in all this country a better shot with a rifle than Harrie Clifton; where he *wills* it the ball will strike, and you may find it there ninety-nine times in a hundred. I do not say and do not suppose that he would be so foolish as to use the weapon against you. I only mention this circumstance as a remarkable fact."

"And is he a man of undoubted bravery?"

"Bravery!" rejoined Fitzwater, with a smile; "if I had only half as much I should now be a general in the army, and not a retired merchant."

"He has doubtless made himself perfect in the art for self-preservation."

"Well, yes, in one sense of the word he has done it. But not in the way that you suppose. Wild game are his principal support, and he has trained himself to knock their heads off at a long shot to save the trouble of going nearer."

"Why, Mr. Irving, you appear to have some acquaintance with him."

"What, I, sir! Oh, no, sir! I—I—don't know anything about him. That is, not much, not much, sir; principally hearsay. You will please to remember I can be no witness either for or against him. In fact, don't know much about him."

While this conversation was going on, Matilda and Francis were deeply engaged discussing the same subject in another room.

"Do you really think that Clifton is in his cottage?" said Miss Seymour.

"I haven't the least doubt of it, my dear friend."

"Well, then, if he is there now," said Matilda, "I don't believe he has been away. What is your opinion?"

"To my opinion you are most freely welcome, because I know it will be acceptable to you, and I sincerely hope it will in some degree dispel that cloud of care and anxiety which I see resting upon your brow. Now, listen to me: I firmly believe that he is not only in his cottage at present, but that he has not been

absent one week, or even one day, from this part of the country. If this should prove to be the case, then, of course, he is guiltless of the awful charge they have against him."

"Oh, Francis Fisher!" exclaimed Matilda, clapping her hand upon his arm; "my friend, my faithful friend, I cannot tell you how grateful to my heart your kindness is this day. How honorable, how noble, to speak thus of one who has been your rival! And now to forget the past and think only of his present danger! Indeed, I fear that I have wronged you much by speaking lightly of you."

"Never mind, my dear Matilda. Oh, excuse me, I see my words offend you. 'My dear friend' I should have said. We must not lose, by talking, these precious moments. Some one must go to Clifton, if possible, and let him know of this danger, that he may escape the peril that awaits him. If you will detain the officers, I will go and acquaint him of it, that he may prepare to meet it in the way most agreeable to himself."

"Oh, generous Francis! how can we ever repay you for all this friendship? Go to him at once. But how shall I retain the sheriff till you can accomplish it? What shall I do? I don't feel like myself. This affair has come upon me so suddenly I am all unnerved and out of thought."

"Do this, Matilda: have them invited to take some refreshment, and then exert all your fascinating powers of conversation, and then they will forget that they have any duty to perform. And while you are doing this I will do all I can for Harrie Clifton."

"That will be the very thing!" exclaimed Matilda. "Do go at once, without one moment of delay, and Blanche and I will manage the officers. We will keep them as long as possible, and they shall not disturb you for some time."

Francis Fisher now glided stealthily from the house, and was soon hidden from view by the hill that rose gently in the rear of the dwelling. Then, as he walked rapidly in the direction of Clifton's cottage, he talked to himself as if arranging everything for the interview.

"If I can only persuade him," said he, "to leave the country and fly to Europe for safety, oh! that would be a 'consummation devoutly to be wished!' Then he would be disgraced forever. He would be in danger of being arrested and tried for this murder should he ever return. His name will be blasted and his fair fame irrecoverably lost. And, *oh, be joyful!* Matilda will soon learn to despise him, and then forget him. But should he give himself up now, and be tried and triumphantly acquitted, by heavens! he would arise upon his feet and shine out before us as bright as ever. I must do all I can to induce him to leave the State. If he is caught, I greatly fear something may turn up to clear him from this crushing charge against him. And then by some '*devilish cantrip,*' as Burns says, I might myself become implicated in the plot! And then, what would they do with me? Ah! the echo of my heart only answers, *what would they do with me?* Well, well, thank heaven, I have accidentally made a great discovery. I find the more I praise up Harrie Clifton the more



Matilda thinks of me. So now I've got the key to her affection, I can unlock the treasure when I please."

When Fisher entered the cottage he found the recluse busily engaged in reading, and as calm in mind as the unruffled lake beneath his dwelling.

"Harrie Clifton," exclaimed Francis, as he shook his rival by the hand, "I come to aid you, if I can be of any use to you. I beg you to feel the same freedom in claiming my assistance as you doubtless would were I an affectionate brother. The necessity, the great *urgency* of the case, is certainly a sufficient apology for this early and open proffer of my friendship."

"What is the necessity?" asked Clifton.

"Have you not heard it? Here is the paper, it will tell you all we know about it."

As the recluse scanned the paragraph, Fisher watched his features with breathless curiosity, expecting every moment to see that placid countenance convulsed with passion or paled with agony. But not a muscle contracted except to form a smile indicative of conscious innocence.

"Well, sir, what comments have you to make on this affair?" inquired Clifton.

"None, sir. I only deem it very unfortunate that any one should think that you are the guilty person."

"Who thinks so?"

"Why, sir, those who are concerned in the administration of the law."

"Impossible! Why do you think so? It must be some other of the same name."

"I know it, because the sheriff and two assistants are already at Fitzwalter's on the lookout for you, and

I, as a friend in need, have come to give you notice that you may escape them."

"I thank you, indeed, for this timely notice," said Clifton. "Notwithstanding, I have no fear of a trial before a competent jury. But I shall not go with them to-day, as I have some little matters to arrange before I leave this cottage."

"So many innocent persons," rejoined Fisher, "have been executed merely because they had no rebutting testimony to offer in their defence, that I advise you never to let this case come to a trial, as the evidence against you is so direct and positive. You see that by the paper."

"This is stranger than fiction," said Clifton. "How do they get this evidence? I have not been away from this locality for many months."

"This murder, you will perceive by the paper, was committed on the night of the 27th of last month. Have you any witness to prove that you were here at that time? For nothing else will have any weight against the clear, precise, and straightforward declaration of your accuser."

"No, sir, there is no one but God who knows that I was here in this cottage on that very night. Even my little servant was absent at that time."

"That, indeed, is extremely unfortunate," replied Fisher, thoughtfully. "And you are *certainly* right and *perfectly* right in saying that you will not go with them now. I would go one step further and declare I never would go with them, never would surrender, never would be taken. A pretty condition of things, indeed, when the lowest culprit in the land, by simply

denouncing a gentleman of sterling integrity, may have him dragged before an insulting community, and have him incarcerated in a loathsome prison, and finally arraigned in a court of justice. And where is your redress? You may be acquitted, but will that recompense you for loss of time, of money, of health, and probably of your good name? For many will say that you escaped a well-merited punishment through the ability of your lawyer, and not through the justice of your cause. Depend upon it, my good friend, many of our laws are defective and exceedingly oppressive. The innocent are not properly protected against the dark insinuations, the malicious envy, or the barefaced villainy of wicked men. In fact, a man of spirit and nerve must and should, and I believe will, stand upon his natural right when the laws of his country are powerless and cannot protect him. I would resist them, or do what I think is much better, leave the country till the remembrance of this affair has blown over. It may be that in less than a year the real criminal may be found, and every charge withdrawn from you. We all know that it is an old saying that 'murder will out,' and as I am just as well satisfied as I am that the sun will rise to-morrow that you are not guilty, then I have a right to conclude that the real culprit will soon be discovered. If you have not the means at present at your command to go elsewhere, I will accommodate you with a loan. It will give me great pleasure to do this, for it will afford me an opportunity of proving to you that I am entirely satisfied that you are falsely accused. I will advance you two thousand dollars on this library, and one thou-

sand on your silver plate, and even more if you desire it."

"I thank you for your generous offer," said, Clifton, "although I do not need it. It certainly would be very unpleasant to be treated as a robber and a murderer. Yet I should have no fear of the result; having implicit confidence in the overruling providence of God, I should go to the bar of justice with a trust in him that would sustain me to the last. But before I go I must have one interview with Matilda. Not such an interview as they might choose to grant, but one unrestrained and free."

"Be careful, Harrie, how you trust yourself in the hands of cunning lawyers. Many a one to advance his own interest, and to get up a reputation for eloquence, would make a fine speech against you, although conscious that it would be the means of having you hung on the last Friday of the next month. Think how many have suffered martyrdom who deserved a better fate."

"Very well," replied the recluse, "I may take your advice. I cannot say what I will do till I see Matilda."

"Then let us go to the woods, or we may be surrounded ere we are aware of it. Come quickly."

Francis Fisher having partially accomplished the object of his visit,—having induced Harrie, as he thought, to escape from the hands of justice, and having ascertained his conclusions on the subject,—now left his rival and returned to Fitzwalter's. As he passed gayly and rapidly along through the forest, as though he exulted in his triumph, it could be easily

conjectured from the import of his language as he talked to himself what he intended to do.

"Has concluded not to be taken till he has had an interview with Matilda. Well, that is something gained in my favor. But why is he so very anxious to see her? Has he a kind of vague impression that I have anything to do with this scheme to ruin him? Probably he has. For what other purpose can he want to see her? Any way, I cannot see what benefit it can be to me, but I can see that it may be a great injury, therefore it strikes me pretty forcibly that I had better prevent it by all the means and all the appliances and all the powers of duplicity combined. Well, well, if double-distilled, triple-refined, and exquisitely-attenuated deception can do it, I shall prove myself no botch at the business. I must arrange it so that an officer can watch Matilda day and night. If I can, only get my rival to abandon this place, what a relief it will be to me! Nothing then will be in my way. Heaven on earth will then be as near to me as daylight at four o'clock in the morning. The fact is, I think he is ruined now whether he goes or not. But I wish he would go. I cannot feel comfortable while he is here. And yet I do not see why I cannot; he is now disgraced forever."

While this goodly young man was busily engaged in defending the character of Harrie Clifton at the glen-mansion, and thus ingratiating himself into the good opinion of Matilda Seymour, the officers returned after a long and ineffectual search, declaring their inability to find the recluse either in his own house or anywhere else. Yet one of them remained secluded near the

cottage, and it was arranged that a constant watch should be kept, that his hiding-place might be discovered. Several assistants at different times were duly sworn in, and every convenience adopted to render them comfortable in their daily and nightly vigilance, which was to continue through sunshine and storm without a moment's intermission. In a stone house under the brow of the hill, and nearly in front of Mr. Irving's, they established their headquarters by paying the tenant handsomely for the privilege which they enjoyed. Here at least three or four times in the twenty-four hours might be seen issuing forth some brave huntsman to relieve a weary guard or to occupy some new pass in the forest. Wander in the woods in any direction, on either side of the Red Clay, and there you could perceive, crouched behind a rock or nestling in deep seclusion, the faithful and intrepid sentinel of the law. So completely was the forest invested and infested by the officers and their minions that it seemed impossible for any one to escape. How, then, was the recluse to find subsistence? Heretofore he had trusted to the unerring rifle to bring down to his feet the game that haunt the woods and waters. Even his faithful little black was gone, who used to bring a partridge or pheasant from his traps every morning, or stroll away to some distant farm-house and return with whatever other comforts the student's home required. But all these means of support were at an end. No one would supply the outlaw, even should he supplicate at their doors for sustenance. If you chance to meet him his brow was knit with unwelcome thoughts, his face pale and furrowed by untiring

vigilance. A few grapes plucked from the pendent vine, a few chestnuts gathered from the opening bur, were his only food. Yet the spirit of the man was not broken; always calm and serene, no cunning could ensnare him, no artifice overmaster his prudence and discretion.

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## CHAPTER IX.

SELDOM does the month of September pass away without a wild commotion among the elements of nature. And now it became evident that a grand display of power was about to be exhibited in the descent of the mighty winds of heaven upon the earth. Vast fields of vapor, some dark and dense, others of a light and snowy aspect, were gathering in the upper air and moving rapidly in opposite directions across the scarcely-perceptible disk of the meridian sun. Ere the evening closed, the darkness became more gloomy than an ordinary night. The great orb of day gave no golden signal as he left the horizon, but passed unobserved away. Yet the tempest of rain was still delayed: the winds had their work to do, and every tree bent to the whistling blast.

Thus wore on the night. Now look upon the glen-mansion; you cannot see it. It seems no longer to have a place upon the globe. Where are those lofty and solid walls which once cast a shadow in the morning upon the beautiful garden in the rear? You hear the rattling of shutters, the creaking of doors, the

whistling of the wind around the angles of some large building, but nothing seems between you and the black sky.

Who is that being who now walks around the dwelling at such an hour as this, and endeavoring with extended hands to find his way? He pauses now beneath a window in the northeast corner of the mansion. He stoops and gathers a handful of pebbles, and now impels them strongly against the panes of glass above him. This experiment was repeatedly tried before any notice was taken of it from within. At last the sash was slowly raised, and a female voice was indistinctly heard exclaiming,—

“Who is there?”

“Matilda,—is that you, Matilda?” rejoined the stranger, as the darkness prevented him from seeing any one.

“Yes. Who are you?”

“Don’t you know me, Matilda?”

“Speak louder. I cannot hear what you say, the wind makes so much noise.”

“Don’t you know me? It is Harrie Clifton.”

“What do you want, Harrie?”

“I want in. Come down and let me in.”

“Indeed, indeed, Harrie, I cannot do it! I would not do it for the world!”

“Listen to me, Matilda: I am starving! I’ve eaten nothing but wild fruit for the last seven or eight days! I must leave this part of the country; I cannot live here. But before I go I beg, I entreat you, let me see you once more.”

“Harrie Clifton, how can I do it? It will never do



for me to let you in at this hour of the night. If you can wait a while I will get you something to eat, and lower it down to you in a basket."

"Matilda, I am in danger every moment that I remain here. Our voices may soon betray me and bring the guards around me. If you will let me in I will be safe, and we can talk without the fear of being overheard."

"I am very, *very* sorry, Harrie, but I can't help it. I will do everything and get everything I can for you, but I can't let you in now. It would never, *never* do!"

"Well, then, Matilda, I suppose I must bid you farewell without an interview, yet I have something to tell you of vital importance."

"What is it, Harrie? Can't you tell me where you are? Do tell me; I am listening."

"No. I will never breathe it in words louder than a whisper. Good-by; a long good-by, Matilda."

"Wait one moment, Harrie, and I'll come down and let you in."

Scarcely five minutes elapsed till the back door which entered the dining-room was softly unbolted and slowly opened. As Clifton passed in he was received by a gentle pressure on the hand and a whisper,—

"Speak very low; there are two persons in this house who would put irons on your wrists."

"Who are they?"

"One, I am sorry to say, is my brother, the other you do not know; I believe he is an under-sheriff, yet of this I am not certain."

"I expected the latter was Francis Fisher."

"Indeed, you are mistaken. He has conducted

himself like a perfect gentleman ever since your misfortune. He never breathes a word against you. But enough of this. Stand here till I get a light. Now I don't know what to do with you," said Matilda, as she produced a light. "Shall I take you to the cellar?"

"Certainly," said Clifton, taking her by the hand and leading the way. "There is no time to bring anything up here. Now," he continued, as soon as he got in sight of the eatables, "while I help myself, Matilda, will you please to make me up a little knapsack of provision to do me on my long journey, or till I can see you again?"

"Yes, I will do it with pleasure, if you tell me how."

"Any way you please, Matilda."

"What shall I put it in? Will this little basket do?"

"No, that will not do. I cannot conceal it among the rocks and leaves; the insects would get into it."

"Ah! now I understand you. A tin kettle will be the very thing, with a tight lid on it," replied Matilda, taking down from a shelf a large and new utensil of the kind.

"You do not intend to give me that big milk-bucket?" exclaimed Clifton, pausing in his industrious efforts to clean the bones of a roasted chicken.

"Mind your own business, Harrie; I know what I am about now."

"What are you going to do with that?" said he again, as he watched the movements of the Beauty while he ate.

"Help yourself, Harrie Clifton. Never mind what

I am doing. You can certainly trust Matilda Seymour to be your quartermaster."

"Very well, my dear friend; just as you please. You certainly feel very much at home in this house. I could not feel at liberty to do so much in the house of a brother."

About ten minutes afterwards he said,—

"I am done now. Let us talk about other matters."

"Not done! You cannot be in earnest!"

"Indeed am I. You know a starving man should eat but little at a time when he begins to break a long fast."

"Oh, yes; I remember that now. How glad I am that this kettle is a big one! and this lid fits so tightly on it you can bury it up in the leaves where no one can find it; and everything in it will keep so well. What a satisfaction it will be to me to remember that you have this with you!"

"Then you do not think that I am outlaw?"

"Think so! Why, Harrie Clifton, have I not given you a proof that I do not think so stronger than words can express it? If there was the least shadow of doubt about it would I have come down at midnight and let you in, and brought you down to this dark and lonely cellar?"

"May God bless you!" exclaimed Clifton, taking her by the hand. "That little sentence hath lifted a millstone from off my crushed and bleeding heart. There is nothing so depressing in this world as *unmerited* censure from those we love. I could not think that you could believe those horrible charges which are now brought against me. Yet I was fearful that some

little doubt might creep into your mind, and this made me miserable. But listen ! hark ! What is that noise ? Did you not hear a door open ?”

“ It is only the wind,” said Matilda, after a pause.

“ I fastened the door when I let you in.”

“ There, again ! Did you not hear that ?”

“ Why, no, Harrie ; I hear nothing but the wind. You are excited with unnecessary fear.”

“ No, my dear friend, my senses are too acute to be deceived. There are others awake in this house.”

“ Then let us go up into the dining-room and fasten all the doors into it ; and if any attempt to disturb us, you can make your escape through the same door by which I let you in.”

“ That will be much better and more comfortable than sitting here, as I have much to tell you, and may never have another opportunity.”

“ Take the kettle and go foremost up the steps,” replied Matilda, “ and I will follow. Step very softly.”

Slowly and quietly they ascended the stairs together and entered the room. Instantly from a recess, where a door enters the front parlor, sprang two persons, lighting almost on top of Harrie Clifton. Matilda screamed and dropped the light, and all was utter darkness. Again and again she screamed, and then pausing a moment to breathe, it seemed to her that the chairs, the tables, and other furniture about the room were being pitched and tumbled and kicked in every direction, so fierce and wild was the struggle to get the mastery. Now on the floor they writhed together like serpents, and now on their feet they, more rapid than young waltzers, trampled with a heavy

jarring tread over the carpet. The shrieks of terror which went up from this room into all parts of the house awakened the sleepers in every chamber, and added the uproar of their bustle and fright to the increasing commotion. The whistling of the winds around the dwelling, the stamping and execrations of the strong-armed combatants, and the repeated calls, amounting almost to yells, which passed from room to room among the aroused and startled occupants, produced a degree of noise and confusion which added greatly to the general alarm.

"What is the matter? Cannot somebody tell me what is the matter?" cried Blanche Irving, as she rushed into her brother's apartment.

"I guess the house is on fire," said he, as he rushed past her into the entry.

"Oh! Constance, Cora, Gertrude, all of you, every one of you, come here! come quickly! brother says the house is on fire. Come! do come down! Do not stop to fix up; put on shawls,—put on anything. Come down-stairs. You will be suffocated if you remain a moment longer. I am nearly stifled with the smoke already."

"Where's Matilda? Where is my sister? I cannot find Matilda!" exclaimed Constance, running about and calling at each opened door.

"Get a light!" cried Fitzwalter, from the bottom of the stairs.

"Get a light!" cried each lady in return. "Get a light!" But no one seemed to have patience enough to get one.

At last, order being somewhat restored by the family

grouping together down in the big hall, and having procured a lamp, they ventured in a body to enter the dining-room, where they still could hear an unaccountable disturbance. The moment the light filled the room a singular picture was presented. Julius Seymour and a respectable young officer, who lodged in the house by permission, were stretched at full length on the floor with their arms around each other so firmly that neither could rise. And Matilda, poor girl, was up on top of the sideboard on her hands and knees nestling among a dozen upset tumblers, and looking an image of despair.

When the first sensation of surprise was over every one felt a strong inclination to laugh, and the first risible warble from Cora started the whole company into a roar. The fun for a while appeared entirely concentrated on Matilda, until she called attention to their own appearance. Here a lady stood with pieces of paper sticking out like horns from her unbraided hair, with a blanket wrapped round her in the manner of a cloak, ill concealing her little feet, one of which had a stocking half on it, the other only a slipper. And there another stood in a like predicament, except in attempting to throw off her night-cap it had caught on a hair-pin, and hung dangling from the back part of her head. And near her stood Blanche Irving with three stockings, a gentleman's boot, one gaiter, several garters, and a comb hitched up under her left arm with the corners of her shawl, and held securely with both hands. Her very small feet were entirely bare, and extended about ten inches below all the dry goods about her.

A few words of explanation from Julius satisfied all that the house was not on fire, and that there was no immediate danger from any source. Away went the ladies to their rooms, and away went the gentlemen to look for Harrie Clifton, who had disappeared in such an unaccountable manner. Every entrance was found securely fastened, and hopes were entertained that he was still in the house. Down to the cellar they ran, expecting to find him there. But no sooner had they reached the basement kitchen than the outer door was discovered to be unbolted, and there, of course, he had escaped them. In less than half an hour down came the ladies again into the dining-room, where Fitzwalter was receiving from Julius Seymour a full account of the night's occurrence.

"I awoke about midnight," said he, casting a glance over all the company, that they might give their attention, "and was unable to get to sleep again, owing, I suppose, to the noise of the storm. After a little while I became very thirsty, so I concluded to come down here, knowing that there was a pitcher of ice-water on the sideboard. Well, just as I was about to leave I heard something in the cellar. I listened, and, gracious heaven! what do you think I heard? Why, Matilda talking to Harrie Clifton, and talking in such a manner,—so kind, so gentle! Why, I believe she said *dear* Harrie!"

"No, I did not say *dear* Harrie, nor anything like it."

"Well, after listening a moment, I stepped up quietly and got Mr. B. to come down, that we might arrest the scoundrel. Just as we got here up he came, and we

seized him ; but how he got loose I cannot tell, as the light went out the moment that we grappled with him. I could not see, but was positively sure that we had him, when you again brought a light."

"What is this? What is this kettle doing here?" said Gertrude, in surprise, as she picked up the bucket which Harrie had dropped.

"It certainly was not here last evening," replied Blanche Irving. "Could some one have brought it when we thought the house was on fire?"

"Why, no! It belongs down-stairs, not up," rejoined Cora, laughing. "Open it and let us see what is in it."

The lid was taken off and the contents exposed to view, when the ladies exclaimed,—

"Well done! *Did you ever!* What does it mean? Take everything out and let us see into it. How queer it is!"

Blanche Irving began to unload the kettle, and to call out in mock gravity each article in regular order,—

"First item, three large dried-peach pies, bottom upwards to fit the rotundity of the lid; second, one tumbler of fresh butter; third, one tumbler of spiced peaches; fourth, one tumbler of cranberry-sauce; fifth, three cucumber pickles, large size; sixth, four cold sweet-potatoes; seventh, about one pint of lima-beans; eighth, four slices of pickled beets; ninth, two loaves of bread; tenth, one roasted chicken; eleventh, five tea-biscuit packed in to fill up space; twelfth and last, about four or five pounds of boiled ham with the fat carefully sliced off."

"Mercy! Who can unravel the mystery?" ex-



claimed Constance, joining in the general laugh. "Was it intended for some picnic?"

"No; look at Matilda how she blushes!" cried Julius. "I see all about it; I understand it. The whole cargo was got up expressly for Harrie Clifton. That shows you how he lives in the woods. How many times has he been supplied in this way? Can any one tell?"

"Can it be possible?" exclaimed Constance. "Why, Matilda Seymour! How could you do it?"

"Laugh and find fault as much as you please," rejoined the lady addressed, with a sad and subdued smile, and an expression half mirthful and half mournful. "If any of you had been placed in my situation you would have done just what I did. Harrie Clifton came to me in a state of starvation, and implored my assistance. You know the rest. If it had not been for my brother's foolish interference everything would have gone well."

"Starvation!" exclaimed several at once. "How can that be?"

"How can it be otherwise?" replied Matilda. "How can he get anything to eat? He dare not enter his cottage,—it is watched day and night. He dare not cook in the woods,—the smoke of his fire would betray him. And should he even shoot a bird, the report of his rifle would bring his enemies around him."

"Well, then, let him clear out," exclaimed Julius, in a sullen and impatient manner. "He is a very foolish man to remain here. He can never accomplish anything by hiding about and starving in these woods."

"Ah! yes; you would be very glad should he be compelled to leave, and bearing with him the brand of a felon."

"Then why not surrender?" retorted Julius.

"I suppose," said Matilda, "that he is not yet prepared to give himself up. He may have some arrangements to make that we know nothing about. Place yourself in his situation, and then you can imagine probably more than one reason why he does not at once clear out or surrender."

"Never mind, my dear Matilda," said the amiable Cora; "while he remains in our neighborhood he must not starve, some contrivance must be made for his support. I am very sorry, indeed, that you failed in your generous effort to supply him for the present."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Julius, in a pettish mood. "Excuse me, Miss Irving, it is nonsense to talk of feeding an outlaw. Do you not know that you would be guilty of an illegal act to shelter him a moment? Do you think that your brother would suffer such a thing for a single day? For my part, I should consider it my duty to inform the sheriff and have your schemes broken up at once."

"You talk as if you were certain that he is a guilty man," said Cora, surprised at his earnest manner.

"Very well, if he is not guilty," replied Julius, "why does he not give himself up, as every honest man would do, and be tried and acquitted? But no; he does not, and the presumption is he dare not."

"That is a very unkind inference," retorted Cora.

"We know he acknowledged to Francis Fisher that he had no witness by whom he could prove an *alibi*, yet he declares that he was in his cottage on the night of the murder. Now you know that this declaration would have no weight in a court of justice; but with us it has an influence because we feel certain that he is an honest man. Therefore should we blame him? Never, never; I cannot and will not do it."

"That is it! I agree with Cora," said Blanche.

"And so do I," rejoined Gertrude.

"But I do not," said Constance. "I think that brother is right."

"Now look at this," exclaimed Julius: "five ladies have expressed their opinions upon a case so plain that it requires but a moment's reflection to see the truth, and yet all have missed it but one. And why is this? Because you are governed by your feelings, while Constance listens to the voice of reason."

"How exceedingly polite you are this early morning," rejoined Cora, with a look that clearly defined her meaning.

Fitzwalter remained silent for some moments, then, casting a keen and searching glance over the company, he said,—

"The *question* of his guilt it is not our province to decide. The *fact* that such a charge exists against him is sufficient while it remains: he cannot associate in any manner with any member of this family."

"But suppose he is not guilty?" said Blanche.

"We have nothing to do with that supposition, my dear sister," resumed Mr. Irving. "The suspicion itself is the point of observation for us; while that en-

dures you will find it to your credit to have nothing to do with him."

"Oh, what a horrible situation!" exclaimed Blanche Irving, rising to her feet and shuddering. "He shall not starve if we can prevent it. What time is it?"

"Three o'clock," said Julius, looking at his watch, and laughing as he continued, "You do not expect to do anything on such a night as this? Listen to the wind! it would blow you off the plantation; and besides, you cannot see your hand before you one yard from the door."

"How soon will it be daylight?" inquired the lady, as she began to replace in the kettle everything which it contained before.

"In about three hours," replied Julius; "and if you have any idea of going to the woods so early, Miss Irving, I will be happy to find you an escort of three or four officers, to see that no accident happens to you."

"I understand you," said Blanche, raising her finger in a reproving manner. "Do not dare to do it, or you will incur my everlasting displeasure."

"What is this?" said Fitzwalter, kicking a bundle of papers before him as he crossed the room.

"A package of letters, I do declare!" exclaimed Cora, as she snatched them up and began to inspect them closely.

"Whose are they? What brought them here?" asked three or four voices at once.

"They are all directed to Harrie Clifton," continued the lady, "and there appears to be a copy of the answer returned to each letter."

"Ah, that's good!" exclaimed Constance. "Harric must have lost them during the struggle. Read them all in the order in which they are written. Let us hear what the outlaw has to say."

"Indeed I will not," returned Cora. "They are certainly letters of some value, or he would not have taken the trouble to retain a copy of the answer sent to each letter. Another fact is indicative of their value: why did he not leave them in his cottage? why did he carry them with him? The only reasonable reply to these questions is plain to every one: he wished not to lose them; he would not trust them where there was a danger of them falling into other hands."

"Who are they written by?" inquired Constance. "I reckon you will not object to tell us that much. You may find that out by the endorsement."

"The superscription is evidently Francis Fisher's," replied Cora. "I am well acquainted with his handwriting."

"Having yourself received several important *billet-doux* from that gentleman," said Matilda, laughing archly, as she bumped her knee slightly against Blanche under the large mahogany dining-table, around which they were now all seated.

"Here is one endorsement with which I am not acquainted," continued Cora, appearing not to have heard the remark of her friend; but a deep blush and a faint smile on her countenance showed that she felt if she did not heed the observation.

"My brother's!" exclaimed Matilda. "Julius Seymour endorsed that letter, and no one else. I will know the contents of it. What is the date of it?"

"It is dated the 10th of last month," replied Cora, as she peeped into the top of it.

"Is any answer to it preserved?" inquired the Beauty.

"No; at least I do not see any."

"Ah, just as I expected, too unkind to be noticed. Open it and read it out."

"It shall not be done," rejoined the brother. "If you read mine you will read the others. This we have no right to do. We are bound by every principle of justice and decency and self-respect to return the letters unopened. The very means by which you obtained them would require you to do this. You found them on the floor in a gentleman's house. That fact of itself is sufficient; your obligation to return them as you found them is sacred and imperative. Not, I will admit, in this case, out of any particular regard to Harrie Clifton,—for I despise him,—or to any others concerned in those letters; it is the duty which you owe to yourselves, to your own refinement, your nice sense of justice and honor. You cannot, most certainly you *dare* not, do so much violence to your own feelings as to be guilty of such a low and degrading act as to read and comment upon private letters obtained in that manner."

"I once heard of a violent tempest in a teapot," said Fitzwalter, in a tone of mock gravity, "and I once knew a man who was determined to commit suicide by drowning himself in his cup of coffee; but I never saw anything quite equal to this before. Here you are cavilling and contending over a matter about which you know nothing. These letters may not con-

tain one single sentence that it would be improper to hear, or they may be filled by nonsensical bravados too trifling to claim a moment's reflection. If this be the case, there would be no impropriety in looking into them, and hence no necessity of any discussion about them. Now, pray tell me, how are we to know this? Debating about the matter will not make you any wiser. There is but one way by which you can settle this mooted question,—you must follow the sagacious and very prudent example of my good old aunt in a similar perplexity. She used to read every novel that she could lay her hands on; and, to quote her own words, 'not that she cared anything about them, no, not her! She would not give a thimbleful of green tea for all the works of fiction that were ever written!' She said that she merely read them with the very laudable and praiseworthy motive to see if they were suitable for her daughters to read. I used to see her poring over them at twelve o'clock at night, when others, less thoughtful and affectionate, would be asleep in their beds. Dear old woman! she was a perfect slave to her children. Many a sacrifice did she make for their comfort. Now, you see, she had more wisdom in her ways than all of you put together. Therefore it is my opinion that we may open the letters and read them, and then we will be able to decide whether it was proper to have done so or not. The seals, you see, are already broken."

"Most excellent advice, my dear brother," said Cora, ironically. "Suppose we instruct the servants in the kitchen to follow it. They could always tell whether the pies and plum-puddings were in a proper

condition to be brought to the table by first eating a portion among themselves."

"That is not quite a parallel case," rejoined Fitzwalter. "However, to lay all jokes on the table, I will justify the reading of those letters by a principle of justice that none can gainsay. It is no secret in this family that Francis Fisher and Harrie Clifton are both paying attention to Matilda Seymour. Now I consider it a solemn and sacred duty, resting upon every gentleman when addressing a lady, to place all the means within his reach before her, that she may become acquainted with his mind, his heart, and his character. Any one who would refuse to do this is not an honorable nor an honest man. Now it is conceded that there is no better way of knowing a man's heart than by the perusal of his private letters. And now I declare, upon the honor of a clear conscience, that Matilda has an undoubted *right* to know the contents of those letters. Therefore all hesitation about the propriety of reading them is entirely removed. You may now open and read them."

"Please remember," said Cora, "that Francis and Harrie are not addressing every member of this company."

"That amounts to nothing," replied Fitzwalter; "we are the counsellors of Matilda. In the absence of her parents a heavy responsibility rests upon us. We must submit to be bored by the perusal of old letters that we may advise her what to do."

"Well, that may satisfy you, as far as it goes," rejoined Julius, "but it does not apply to my letter."

"But this will apply to it," said Matilda, adroitly



snatching the letter from between the fingers of Cora as the latter was inspecting them more carefully.

"Let her have it, let her have it!" cried Julius, seeing the impossibility of preventing it. "I care nothing about it. It is all a piece of commonplace nonsense anyway. But ere you read those letters, once more I beg you to remember that whatever we do that lessens our own self-respect most assuredly lowers us in the estimation of God. Now do just what you please, I have nothing more to say."

"What shall we do?" asked Cora, observing a general silence, and struck with the air of dignity and true manliness upon the features of Julius Seymour.

"Here, read this letter," said Matilda, presenting the one written by her brother.

"That should not be read first," said Cora; "according to the dates it should come last."

"Very well, then, I will take care of it," rejoined Matilda. "Let us hear first what Francis has to say; do begin the letters."

Agreeable to this request Miss Irving straightened herself up, inhaled a deep breath, glanced her eye over the company, and began:

"HARRIE CLIFTON:

"DEAR SIR,—When you were first admitted to the family of Mr. Irving, it was regarded by all of us as a mere act of charity. We supposed that, in your humble condition, you might often be in need of the common necessities of life, hence it was suggested at first to send you every day a certain portion of the sur-

plus after the usual dinner service was over. However, when it was ascertained that you had during your idleness amassed a considerable smattering of knowledge, they concluded, out of respect to your learning, to let you eat occasionally at the mansion. Then it was debated whether to permit you to have a seat at the first table with the family, or to assign you a place among the servants. The former plan, through mere pity, was adopted.

"But the absurd idea of *you*, the poor, friendless recluse, ever paying attention to any one of the ladies never entered the most credulous mind. And now, when they see that you are really serious in your suit, it affords them infinite amusement.

"They laugh at your credulity immoderately when the affair is mentioned, they consider it so very ridiculous. As I was instrumental in taking you to their house, I regarded it as a burning shame that I did not acquaint you of this state of things; for let me assure you that, notwithstanding our rivalry, I am your sincere friend. Therefore I said to myself, if Harrie ever discovers this, he will never forgive me for keeping it from him. It is very painful and humiliating to me to be obliged to make these disclosures. It is an old and very true saying that those who tell us of our faults are our best friends. Hence

"I am, my dear sir,

"Your very sincere friend,

"FRANCIS FISHER.

"P.S.—This letter, of course, you will receive as entirely confidential."

During the reading of this epistle it was curious to observe the effect it produced upon the company. Matilda's eyes flashed and sparkled with indignation. Mr. Irving arose, and walked the floor in a hurried and perplexed mood. His hands, crammed into his pockets, ground the silver change together at every pause. Others appeared to treat the whole affair as a matter of amusement, and even tried to start a general laugh.

"Is he in earnest, or what does he mean?" said Matilda.

"What does he mean?" replied Blanche. "Certainly he does not mean what he says: he is only joking. We cannot believe that he is sincere in the application of such language to our family. He is evidently trying to inflict a wound upon his rival by assuming a serious air, yet if we were to call him to an account for it he would at once acknowledge that it was nothing but playful irony. When that was written his cause was apparently hopeless, and therefore great allowance should be made for this exhibition of his irritated feelings. He would not do so now under present circumstances. Since the fall of his rival how different have been his actions! how noble his sentiments towards Clifton! how prudent has been his bearing in every particular! I have not the least doubt that, could we know his real feelings at this moment, we should find that he deeply regrets ever having written such a letter, for I know that his sympathy for Clifton has all the sincerity of a true friend."

"Well done for you, my dear sister!" exclaimed Fitzwalter. "I was just going to come down upon

Fisher with the severest censure till you recalled to mind the old adage that circumstances alter cases. When Francis wrote that letter he was an object of pity. His cause was so hopeless that I felt distressed about him, and now feel that we should forgive this effort to regain his lost position."

"That is right, my dear brother. Francis Fisher, at the date of that letter, met with such cruel disappointments that I can forgive him for returning a pretty severe blow with his pen. How few in his peculiar position would have said less, and how many would have said more,—ay, indeed, would have used firearms to remove or checkmate a rival. I am really glad that Fisher did no more than this. Now, Cora, let us hear the answer to this letter."

"FRANCIS FISHER :

"DEAR SIR,—Your letter has just come to hand. I am not astonished or surprised at the contents of it. I have studied your character, and I know you well. It is just such a production as I should have expected would come from you. 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' No, my dear sir; no more now than they did eighteen hundred years ago. Then, of course, I could not expect a gentlemanly letter from one whom I knew is not a gentleman. Do not suppose that your expressions irritate my feelings. Very far from it. I know that the whole burden of your letter is a tissue of falsehood. I know that Mr. Irving and family would never degrade themselves so much, even in their own estimation, as to be guilty of the duplicity and deception which you try to fasten on

them. To conclude, let me assure you that I still entertain the highest, the most grateful, and most friendly feelings towards you. I shall never forget that it was through your exertions that I first became acquainted with the Morning Star of beauty and perfection.

“I am, very respectfully,

“Your sincere friend,

“HARRIE CLIFTON.”

“There, now,” said Constance, “that letter is just as dishonorable as the other. Ah, the villain! he thought he was sure of my sister, and held her up in a taunting manner to Fisher.”

“I cannot agree with you,” said Cora. “In my opinion it is a calm and dignified reply. But we may discuss that matter again. Let me read you Fisher’s rejoinder to that letter:”

“HARRIE CLIFTON:

“SIR,—Your impudent and blasphemous answer has been received. You quote Scripture with the same freedom and facility that a blackguard takes his Maker’s name in vain. Hence, in a moral view, you are both on the same level. You might as well call me a liar as to insinuate that I do not speak the truth. You are no gentleman. Do not thank me. Keep your thanks and your gratitude for those who permit you to *feed* at their table. You are a villain, and I can prove it.

“With feelings of profound hate,

“I am, sir, your antagonist,

“FRANCIS FISHER.”

"Look at that!" exclaimed Fitzwalter. "He says that he can prove that Clifton is a villain. Now you will take notice that this letter was written before any of the charges against him were made public. Can it be possible that he knows more than we have already heard? If this is the case, does it not explain entirely the many hints which he has often given to beware of Harrie Clifton? He might even have heard that he was an outlaw, but having no proof to offer disdained to present a mere rumor in opposition to a despised rival. What an honorable deportment we here see manifested by Francis Fisher, and how admirably this accords with his present behavior! Not a word, not a look against poor Clifton, but ever and anon expressions of the purest sympathy ever since his misfortune became known to the world."

"Your remarks, I think, are very just," replied Blanche. "When these letters were written Francis Fisher was suffering all the pains and torments of a repulse. He saw that just in proportion as the light of Matilda's eyes was withdrawn from him it beamed with an encouraging and cheering ray on his fortunate rival. Then how excusable all the harshness contained in his letters; and how strange it is that he did not say to us in confidence much more than he ever did reveal. If he knows that Clifton is an outlaw, his sympathy for him should not conceal it. Generosity and benevolence should yield to the higher sentiment of justice."

"Shall I now read Clifton's answer to the last letter?" asked Cora.

"Yes, yes; by all means," cried several.

“Very well, here it is :”

“FRANCIS FISHER :

“DEAR SIR,—I am very sorry to perceive by your last that my letter has disturbed the quiet placidity of your mind. I always feel that God will not hold a man guiltless who induces another to make a consummate dunce of himself.

“It was not my intention to call you a liar, and I did not do it. When I say a man utters a falsehood, I only mean that, according to my judgment and knowledge, his statement is not true ; because he may, owing to mental deformity, suppose that he is speaking the truth. Now you see that, according to this construction, you are exonerated from the charge. You make a positive declaration that you can prove that I am a villain. If it is a fact that I am one, you will oblige me very much by proving it. I am floating down the stream of time on a very rotten cake of ice if it be true that I am a villain, and the sooner I know it and mend my ways the better. You know that we are composed of two natures, an animal and a spiritual. The one lives only about seventy or eighty years, while the other may celebrate its birthdays through countless ages of eternity. Now the exercise of a little common sense should satisfy every one which of these natures is entitled to the most indulgence during their present companionship. Some prefer to give all the privileges and comforts and enjoyments to the animal, but I choose to hold the little varlet in chains of iron, and make him toil in the service of his long-lived and more amiable brother.

Now if there is any villany in me it belongs to the little gourmand, and the sooner we corner him up and scourge it out of him the better.

"Therefore I beg you, my friend, to bring on your proof. Let us spare no pains nor expense in our mutual efforts to convict and punish the truant rascal.

"I am, very respectfully,

"Your sincere friend,

"HARRIE CLIFTON."

"Did you ever hear such a tirade of unmeaning nonsense?" exclaimed Julius. "Why, the man must be insane! If not, he is certainly a very shallow fool. This eternal and continual boasting of his merits, his virtue, his standing, his morals and his self-control show clearly that the man is soft or cracked in the brain. There is such a callous indifference to his fate that he appears to me to be a very repulsive being."

"I think it more than likely," said Cora, "that you do not understand his mind nor his character either. However, we will let that pass for the present. Shall I read any more of their correspondence now?"

"Here," said Matilda, handing over the letter of her brother, "read this one,—it may throw some light upon the subject."

"I'll do it if you will stop gaping. I cannot read and gape too, and you will have me at it if you do not quit it. There, now, you made me do it!"

"Never mind, Cora," said Matilda, looking at her watch, "it is four o'clock, and I expect everybody



gapes who happens to be awake at such an early hour in the morning. Read it out."

"HARRIE CLIFTON:

"DEAR SIR,—The fatal facility which exists in the country of becoming acquainted with strangers has accidentally brought you into the company of my sister Matilda. Her relatives exceedingly regret that such an intimacy was ever formed. You entered the family an entire stranger. No mutual acquaintance ever gave you a verbal or written introduction. You are now requested, in the name of her parents, to discontinue your visits. If you are a gentleman of standing and education, as you profess to be, I have said all that is required; you will cease to intrude upon the family. If you are not a gentleman, of course, you will continue to trouble and torment us with your daily calls.

"Matilda is now fully sensible of the extreme folly she has committed in allowing you to pay any attention to her in your present unknown position.

"However, if you request it, we will suspend our judgment respecting your character and condition in life until you have time, by the production of unexceptionable evidence, to prove that you are worthy of our acquaintance and regard.

"Very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"JULIUS SEYMOUR."

"What a disclosure that is!" exclaimed Matilda.  
"Oh, my brother, my brother! how could you treat me so? How could you utter such language? How

could you wrong and deceive Harrie Clifton in that manner? You have done him a most terrible injury by keeping from us the cause of his absence. Oh, cruel, cruel brother!"

"Have patience!" replied Julius, "and reflect a moment about it before you condemn me, and you will see that I have only discharged my duty. I felt entirely satisfied that he was not a suitable companion for you, and hence I was resolved to break up your intimacy. Now I think all will admit that recent events justify the course which I have pursued."

"Did he answer that letter?" inquired Matilda.

"Yes, he did."

"Where is the answer?"

"In my pocket."

"Hand it here, if you please."

"Had we not better leave it till some other time? It must be very tiresome to our good friends here to be listening to such nonsense."

"Nonsense! You talk like a child who knows not the meaning of the words he utters. Produce the letter, and let it speak for him."

"Here it is. You will please to notice when you read it that I stand justified by him for what I have done."

"Cora," said the sister, as she handed the letter over the moment she received it, "will you read it?"

"Most cheerfully will I do it. The more we hear from poor Harrie the better I like him."

"JULIUS SEYMOUR:

"DEAR SIR,—Your letter has been received. Your motive in writing to me appears to be entirely honor-

able. I have nothing to say against it. I can assure you that I highly esteem the watchful care and unselfish affection which you manifest for your noble sister. I sincerely hope that the hour may never come when she will be deprived of such a brother.

“When I consider the low state of morals perceptible among young men in general, I see clearly the necessity of great prudence and circumspection in the choice of associates, particularly in those who are admitted to the confidence and regard of dear and unsuspecting sisters.

“Therefore I cannot and do not blame you for breaking up an intimacy with Matilda while I remain, comparatively, a stranger to your family. Better be overcautious than not sufficiently prudent to prevent the shipwreck of her young and guileless heart. I know of nothing more revolting to the sensibility of a pure and high-spirited woman than to be united to a man of a gross and undeveloped nature. How often will her feelings be shocked by the unrefined language of such a being. May the angels of heaven watch over and preserve your sister from such a fate as this!

“I thank you for the offer of a suspension of judgment in my case. I will endeavor to prove to you who I am before many months. Grant me one request: permit Matilda to read this letter, that she may know the cause of my absence.

“I am, dear sir,

“Your very obedient servant,

“HARRIE CLIFTON.”

“Now, my dear brother, what have you to say

against that letter? And what have you to say in your own defence? There is a plain and honorable request, and so reasonable in its nature that we might suppose you could not deny it to the lowest person in the country. Why did you not do it? Look at it again. He says, 'Grant me one request: permit Matilda to read this letter.' What harm could there be in this? Oh, no harm whatever; but it might defeat your scheme to ruin a poor, unfortunate stranger. You were determined to conceal the fact that you were the only cause of his absence from this house. Ay, and when a foul charge was preferred against him, and the only thing that gave a color of truth to it was the work of your hands, you were silent. Is there no humanity, no charity, no benevolence in your whole nature, that you could not utter one little sentence and say, 'I was the cause of his absence'? Oh, my brother, how greatly you have wronged me! how you have crushed my feelings to gratify a worldly prejudice!"

"Matilda, you have mistaken my motive in withholding that letter. You have no right to countenance any one who is even supposed to be an outlaw."

"Supposed to be! But who believes it after hearing those letters?" exclaimed Matilda.

"Those letters," replied Julius. "Why, what do they all amount to? Nothing, simply nothing. Words are like bank-notes, very easily used if you have them. And it is no proof that a man is honest because he can always pay you in good money or a profusion of fine language. Let Harrie Clifton give us substantial and irrefutable evidence of his moral worth, and I will offer him a welcome hand as soon as

any one. But do not suppose that I can accept a few paltry letters as a proof of this. Do not try to persuade me that they are all-sufficient. The law has declared that upon his brow may be seen the mark of Cain. While that stain is there we will have nothing to do with him."

"Your brother is right," rejoined Fitzwalter. "There are people enough in this world who are known to be honest and good and with whom we can associate, without keeping up acquaintance with those whose characters are equivocal."

"What a terrible thing is crime," said Matilda, "when the mere suspicion of its existence can so brand the noblest being that ever walked on the banks of the Red Clay. You may be somewhat excusable now for your treatment of poor Harrie, since the foulest slanders that can be found are hurled against him by living demons and believed by credulous mortals; yet this will not justify your behavior towards him when that letter was written. He then stood without a blemish before us. By his words and actions when in our company he maintained his position as an honorable and trustworthy man. How could you at that time discard him and deny him such a reasonable request as to withhold his letter from me?"

"He was poor and unknown to us," replied Julius; "and although I could trust such a man to black my boots, to drive my carriage, to carry my letters, and do a hundred other menial turns for me, I could not trust him to hold the destiny and happiness of my sister at his disposal. Subsequent events have shown the wisdom of my prudence. Suppose the knowledge of

this affair had slumbered in oblivion a whole year, and during this time you had become his lawful wife, and then, just in the midst of the honeymoon, this charge had been made against him, would it not have been more terrific and more startling than a clap of thunder in a clear sky?"

"Do not mention it! do not mention it!" exclaimed Matilda. "It makes me shudder to contemplate such a picture. Although there is not one word of truth in the charge, I tremble at the thought; yet I could bear it all for his sake, could console him in adversity, soothe his weary heart in its affliction, and infuse a hope of comfort in the darkest hour of his trials."

"You would have much more than that to do," replied her brother; "you would have to suffer all the blasting effects of his sin,—the neglect and coolness of your acquaintances, the scoffs of the sycophant, the sneers of the crowd, the loud hootings of vulgarity, and the insulting boldness of every creditor."

"All that would have been but nothing to my own feelings," rejoined the Beauty. "I would have said, 'God forgive them, they know not what they do!' Yes, the opinions of others would have fallen lighter than a feather upon my heart when its whole sympathy was absorbed by the agony and danger of another being."

"That is the thought itself," said Julius. "It is very probable that the sympathetic feeling which you entertain for him prevents you from beholding in its true light his position and the impropriety of having anything to do with him."

"But he is *not* guilty," rejoined the lady.

"We do not know that," said the brother. "Suppose he is not, the accusation stands against him. Is that not enough to alarm you?"

"Suppose you drop this subject for the present," said Cora, smiling; "the jury will decide it for you when they catch him. Let us conclude what we will do with these letters. I think they should be returned to Harrie Clifton."

"Yes," replied Fitzwalter, "return them by all means, and say nothing to him about them, and if he is the gentleman he professes to be, he will have the delicacy to say nothing either. It would be rather unpleasant to my feelings that he should know that we have read the letters; yet I still think that we had a perfect right to do so, and as we were actuated by no unworthy motive, no real censure can fall upon us."

Julius smiled but said nothing to this remark, but you could plainly discern from the peculiar meaning of that smile that he thought that if the act was right then no excuse was needed, and the very fact that Fitzwalter had endeavored to excuse the deed showed that he himself was not entirely satisfied with the counsel he had given respecting the perusal of those letters.

"Why do you place upon me that injunction?" asked Matilda. "I wish, if I can meet with Harrie Clifton again, to talk with him about those letters, and to assure him that I never saw the one sent to Julius till now. I want to report to him that they made a very favorable impression upon every one of us, notwithstanding some of you would not acknowledge it."

"That will not do," rejoined Fitzwalter. "Neither

Harrie Clifton nor Francis Fisher must know that we saw these letters. I would not have them to know it for a thousand dollars. The effect on Francis would be very unpleasant. He would feel that we had taken advantage of an unforeseen accident to know his most secret thoughts. You remember that he declares that his first letter is confidential. Place yourself in his situation, and reflect a moment how you would like to have your correspondence on a subject of such a delicate nature read and laughed at and commented upon, as we have done with these letters, and I think you will say that silence is the only course to pursue. You recollect that I told you, although I was only joking at the time, that after having read the letters we could then decide about the propriety of the act. I now decide that we should not have read them, so do not make it worse by talking about them."

"Very well, then," said Matilda; "I will say nothing about them to either of the gentlemen, unless they first broach the subject."

The reader may remember that Harrie Clifton stated to Matilda that he had an important revelation to make to her, and that he earnestly solicited one interview with the family before giving himself up or leaving the State. By untiring persuasion she prevailed on Fitzwalter to permit Harrie to visit them the coming night, provided she could arrange the matter. A letter was sent at once by the coachman, who fortunately found Clifton in the woods, and a promise was returned to visit them, if possible, the ensuing evening.



## CHAPTER X.

THE landscape around the glen-mansion was wrapped in darkness. Not a single ray of light could be seen to glimmer through the closed and strongly-bolted shutters. The appearance of everything indicated the quietude of a reposing family. A rain-storm and a dark midnight had met together, and nothing could be heard but the wind, and nothing appeared to move but the bending shrubbery and the broad shades about the dwelling. Yet within that building many lights were burning, and bright eyes were watchful of the passing hours. At length a being recognized by all entered the parlor and stood before them. It was Harrie Clifton. His brow was pale as the snows of winter, and his lip trembled, but not with fear. The pride and power of conscious innocence gave to his finely-chiseled features the bearing and the grandeur of a Washington. In a circle before him, as if by previous arrangement, the family took their seats. The recluse sat alone by a table in the centre of the room. Intently he surveyed that small but critical audience. Every countenance was lighted up by the shaded lamp that burned beside him. Plainly he could read the expressions cast by stealthy glances from one to another. There rested Matilda upon a sofa,—sad, but with a hopeful and cheering ray occasionally beaming from her dark eye upon him. Beside her sat a brother and

sister, each busily engaged in exchanging looks of pity and contempt for the intruder. On a lounge near them sat Fitzwalter and his sisters,—Cora, Blanche, and Gertrude. The emotions perceptible among them were sympathy, respect, and admiration, with one exception,—the brother manifested a shadow of disquietude, as if he felt that he was compromising his character by too great a familiarity with an outlaw.

The silence was soon broken by Mr. Irving informing Clifton that if he had anything to say they were now ready and willing to hear it.

"I thank you," said the recluse, as he rose and placed the chair before him. "I thank you for this opportunity to speak in my own defence. In doing this you grant me a kind and generous favor. I ask nothing more. Should I prove my innocence, that deep sense of justice which gives to all of you a shining purity, a magnanimity of character, will accord to me, as it would to the lowest menial, an open and undisguised acquittal. Where, you may ask, are my witnesses? I answer, in my knowledge of the laws of God, will I place my defence. Study the works of the Creator as you may throughout the endless phases of the universe, you can find but one great lesson which they teach,—that there is no way to heaven in this world, nor in the next, but by doing that which is unquestionably right; that no happiness can ever be obtained by doing that which is wrong; that all the schemes and plans and ways which the ingenuity of man can devise cannot wring from fortune or from fate one hour of real enjoyment if sought in violation of

the will of his Maker, as expressed and published by his laws written upon the eternal pages of Nature; that punishment is inseparably connected with every crime; that no sin can ever be perpetrated by man without an adequate punishment reaching the transgressor. Now, as every action of man has some motive for its manifestation, with these truths engraven upon my heart, what motive could induce me to commit robbery or murder?

“An individual whose mental powers have been neglected, and whose passions are not under self-government, may take the life of another while under great excitement; but deliberate, cold-blooded murder can only be committed by the undeveloped, the ignorant, the depraved, by those who think that the wealth of this world can open with its golden key a rich and fragrant entrance to every enjoyment which the unsatisfied heart may desire.

“What motive could I have, or what could induce me to embark in a career at war with every principle of justice, every feeling of my nature, every lesson of my childhood? Would any of you be willing to sully the purity of your hearts, to forfeit the protecting love of a Heavenly Father, to go down and be numbered with naked and shivering vice for money, or for any position in society within the reach of a millionaire? And if you would not do these things, if even the contemplation of such depravity causes a shudder to thrill through your bosoms, what right have you to suppose that a madness more horrible than insanity controls my actions and gives a cast and character to my whole individuality?

“With reverence I will say that I have endeavored to cultivate an intimate acquaintance with my heavenly parent, and I have so far succeeded that no language can convey to you an idea of the peace and calmness of my soul in my frequent interviews with Deity. All I can say is, that should you ever feel what I have felt, or have ever experienced the sensation, you can understand what I mean, and will believe me now when I solemnly declare that I am entirely innocent of the charge brought against me. And you will also believe my declaration that the daily approval of all my actions by the Supreme Being is so essential to my happiness, that when I have by thought or deed done the least thing contrary to His will I am restless and miserable till I succeed in restoring myself to His favor. Yes, and when I contemplate the eternity of existence and the relentless justice of Omnipotence, I am lost in amazement at that imbecility of man that can permit his animal nature to jeopardize the God-like destiny of his immortal spirit. I know that to be happy in the next world I must be at peace and in love with God and man in this my transient home. I also know and feel that a preparation for heaven is, and ought to be, the work of a lifetime ; that to dwell among the saints and angels we must have the intelligence, the purity, the brightness of our associates, or even there we could not be happy. Our ignorance, our grossness would be repulsive to them, and we, even in heaven, would be miserable.

“You have now heard my defence. My belief has nothing in it peculiar or unnatural. The great principles taught by the Saviour sanction the propriety of my

faith. I will now pause to hear your decision, after which you shall have my conclusion."

The moment Clifton resumed his chair all eyes were turned to Fitzwalter, impatient to learn the effect upon his mind.

"I am extremely happy," said he, "in being able to say that I now feel,—yes, I will use stronger language,—that I know that you are innocent. Yet I beg leave to be plain with you. It is not the sentiments which we have heard which have removed every doubt, for such language might possibly be uttered by a talented knave. It is the truthful, the earnest sincerity emanating from your features while you speak that convinced me that you are not the man who did the deed."

When Mr. Irving finished, each one gladly and heartily endorsed his expressions, all but Matilda. Her feelings were too full to trust a word upon her lip. She rested upon the end of the sofa, with her face buried in her hands, and was silent.

"I am now ready," said Clifton, "to bid you all farewell. I will go to the bar of justice and calmly await the result of my trial. Should they condemn me, I will carry with me to the gallows the high consolation that I leave behind me in this happy circle a knowledge of my innocence. And those who know me not and think me guilty will learn in the next world, if not in this, that Harrie Clifton is incapable of committing so foul a deed as murder."

"Allow me," said Fitzwalter, "to make one request. The way in which criminal trials are conducted you are probably aware. You have no personal testi-

mony to prove an *alibi*. Your counsel, in his frequent interviews with you, would soon become prepossessed in your favor. Hence he would make every effort in his power to save you. He would leave no stone unturned that might produce a favorable impression upon the jury. In short, he would summon every one of us, and endeavor by the respectability of your acquaintance and associates to show that there must be some grand mistake in the indictment."

"Not drag us before a court of justice?" exclaimed Cora, springing to her feet and extending her hands in the attitude of astonishment.

"Ha! but we will not go," said Gertrude.

"That is just where you are mistaken, my dear sisters," rejoined Fitzwalter. "It would be impossible to avoid it if they were determined to have you. But, notwithstanding, it would be most exceedingly unpleasant to appear in this public manner. If we could be of any real benefit to the prisoner we would not hesitate a moment. But let me offer the suggestion I intended, and I hope there will be no necessity of any open manifestation on our part in your favor. My proposition, or rather request, is this: that you will leave this part of the country for the present, and not surrender yourself into the hands of justice unless it should become indispensable to establish your character by a public trial. If you will do this, I sincerely believe that something may turn up that will render your arrest unnecessary."

"Your request I will most cheerfully comply with," said Harrie, "provided that you and all who are now present regard that course as entirely honorable. As I

now stand exonerated from all crime in this family, I have nothing more to detain me but the unwillingness to part with your company; but as that cannot now be enjoyed without secrecy and restraint, it would be better that I should leave you."

"Where do you propose to go?" asked Blanche Irving, casting a furtive and peculiar glance at Matilda.

"I object to that question," said her brother. "It would be better that we remain ignorant of his place of retirement,—of course, I mean till the storm is over."

"What a cruel necessity!" rejoined Blanche. "I fear he will wander away into some other lonely glen, and there become a confirmed recluse."

"Never fear, my dear sister. Harrie Clifton has discovered that there are more angels in heaven and on earth than were ever dreamed of in a hermit's philosophy."

"Good, my dear brother! That is something indeed, coming as it does from Fitzwalter."

At that moment a door was gently opened, and the cheerful glance of a servant caught the eye of Cora, to whom she made a slight but respectful nod. Miss Irving then arose and invited the company into an adjoining room to partake of a midnight banquet "prepared expressly," she said, "to give a warm and social welcome to our persecuted guest."

"You see now," said Blanche Irving, laughing happily and addressing herself to Clifton as they walked together into the dining-hall, "that we knew that you would triumphantly clear yourself of every charge against you."

The refreshments prepared for the entertainment

might have been mistaken by many for a bridal supper. The fact is, Matilda was so great a favorite among them, so much was she loved and cherished and petted, that every one felt a strong desire to give a kind reception to the man who had made a deep and probably a permanent impression upon her mind.

An hour of convivial enjoyment, apparently without a cloud, unnoticed passed away, and then the little party, evidently pleased with themselves and delighted with each other, broke up and retired to court a transient slumber. Not so with Harrie Clifton. He had many arrangements to make in his lone cottage before leaving the country; and as his freedom and safety depended upon the secrecy and promptitude of his movements, he felt that it was a time for action, not for sleep. Therefore cautiously and quickly he left the house, passed through the forest, and entered his dwelling while still enveloped in darkness. And now how carefully he prepares to leave that ever-dear and secluded cabin. By the dim light of a dark-lantern he turns over and scans many a paper, tears up some, while others he compactly folds up and disposes about his person. The drawer in the old table is thoroughly overhauled; shelf after shelf and book after book are closely examined that no writing of value or of private import should be left to attract the gaze of the curious, the grasp of the slanderer, or the busy fancy of the mischief-maker.

While thus abstractedly absorbed, and heedless of the passing minutes, a low knock was heard against the door. If an earthquake had shook the cottage, it could not have surprised or startled Clifton more at



that particular time. Yet he did not lose his presence of mind ; he did not say "walk in" under the sudden impulse of the moment. Very silently and cautiously he took his seat upon a chair and listened. *Tap, tap, tap* again was repeated a little louder than before.

"I do wish," said Harrie to himself, "that somebody would tell that intruder that nobody lives here."

*Tap, tap, tap.* "Confound you and your taps. If I was outside, instead of in, I would learn you better manners than to be tapping that way at my cottage at this hour of the night."

BANG ! BANG ! BANG ! "Only hear the iron-fisted savage how he shakes the door ! That makes four times he has knocked without an answer ; certainly he will soon get tired of that and go off. I wonder if the scoundrel knows that I am in ?"

"Harrie, Harrie, Harrie Clifton !" in a low whisper, was now breathed through the key-hole, scarcely loud enough at first to be distinctly heard.

"What ! can it be possible ? Do I know that voice ?"

"Harrie ! open the door, Harrie, and let me in."

"Who are you ?" said Clifton, speaking for the first time in an audible tone.

"I am your friend. Let me in and I will convince you of it."

"Give me your name, or you shall not enter."

"I am Edward Marcel, once your enemy, but now your very good friend."

"Ay, that may be true or it may be false ; however, I will let you in, Marcel."

When the door was opened in stepped a portly individual, apparently about thirty or thirty-five years of

age. A profusion of dark hair shaded and almost concealed a pale, low, yet somewhat expansive forehead. A heavy moustache and a very large pair of whiskers gave to his countenance a gloomy and repulsive aspect. When he spoke you could scarcely distinguish a smile from a contemptuous sneer, so much of the old iron heart was still perceptible in the stern expression of his features.

"Harrie Clifton," said he, after they had surveyed each other for some time in silence, "you are surprised to see me, yet ever since we parted on that eventful night I have asked for you, looked for you, ay, mourned for you, but all in vain till now. At last I heard of your whereabouts, because you had become the talk of the neighborhood. Yes, and, more than this, the newspapers called you an outlaw. I said in my heart that's a lie; Harrie Clifton is not an outlaw. However, I was glad to see your name in print, for it told me of the very place where I could find you."

"And why were you so anxious to meet with me? Our trades are different; our views can never harmonize; our tastes are antagonistic; our associates belong to opposite grades of society. You follow the dictates of your passions; I hold the passions in subjection. Can we feel any pleasure in each other's company?"

"I come not to intrude upon you," said Marcel. "I come, I own, with a very selfish motive,—I come to beg your pardon for the wrongs that I have done you. Till that is granted I cannot be happy."

"What, sir! do you expect to trifle with a man as you once did with a boy? I will not listen to such

hypocrisy. When the most degraded on earth reform, there may be some hopes of a reformation in Edward Marcel, but not till then."

"Harrie Clifton, hear me, I beg you. Is there anything impossible with God? Does He not often place man in such trying situations that he becomes sensible of the paramount necessity of a change in his course of life?"

"Well, what of it? I suppose He does."

"Yes, you know it. Now was I not once in so lost a condition that nothing but the Almighty could take me out of it?"

"That might have been the case, sir."

"It was a fact, I own it. Preaching could not touch me; prayers only excited my derision; piety I laughed at as a mark of fear in the credulous. Ay, nothing could reach me, and I gloried in the strength I possessed. But, most fortunately for my soul, you split my skull open; others tied my hands and feet, and then placed me in a boat and sent me adrift on the Susquehanna. Now listen to the result: Some time on that day I was cast ashore in a dense, lonely, and impenetrable thicket. My limbs were stiff and swollen, and I could not loose them. I was nearly exhausted from the loss of blood, and soon became very hungry, yet I could get nothing to eat. I had plenty of water near me, and by rolling over on my face I could at any time get a drink. This was all that I had in the world to nourish me. I continued in this state about two weeks, and then the singular effects of starvation began to creep upon me. My memory—I always had a pretty good memory—was increased in its power, I reckon, tenfold. I could call to mind every-

thing that I had ever done, or read, or heard of. I could see almost as well at night as I could in the daytime, and, what was very singular, it did not make any difference whether my eyelids were closed or not. In fact, I could see things many miles away from where I lay. How long this continued I cannot exactly remember. At last the trouble came. One day I rolled down, as usual, to get my drink, and I could not get back again. There I was, lying on my face by the water's edge, too weak even to turn over. I very soon found that the waters were rising all around me. I knew the cause: a very strong southeasterly wind was blowing and piling the flood back, so as to make an uncommon high tide. What a condition! No pen can describe the feelings which I experienced that night. I was too wicked to die, and well did I know it. Yet I saw Death so near that I fancied I could feel his cold breath. Slowly and steadily the tide rose, and at last embraced me, pouring into my nostrils and mouth till I was stifled to suffocation. Senseless I became, and was washed down the current a drowned man. In this condition I drifted and lodged on a small island at the head of the bay, and was there found by a fisherman, who took me to his cabin and restored me to life again. Now what I wish to tell you is this: While I was half dead, or whole dead, and I don't know which, I saw people whom I knew, and who had died many years before, and then I was entirely satisfied that there is an hereafter, that the soul lives when the body is lifeless."

"And is it possible, Marcel, that you never believed that before?"

"Yes, it is possible. Well, I had a kind of vague conjecture, or a dim, undefined hope that there might be such a thing as another state of existence, but I had no proof of the fact. Now I know it, because I have seen it, and have talked with those who once lived on this earth."

"Do you not think that was all a dream?"

"A dream! Why, sir, dead men do not dream. I was dead, and I saw my body when my spirit was out of it as plain as I now see you."

"I am very glad, Marcel, that something has enlightened your understanding, and I am also very glad that I and all the world have not to wait until we die before we can believe in a future state. Certainly there are proofs enough around ~~us~~ to satisfy any reasonable mind of that great and glorious truth."

"Well, I don't know where they are; I never saw them."

"You never saw them! Why, that is strange indeed. The perfect adaptation of all the things of this world to man's physical nature is to me a satisfactory proof of a future state of existence. Man is a consuming animal, and nearly every plant that grows, every brier that blossoms, every tree that shades him, and the earth, the air, the waters around him offer a never-ceasing yet ever-changing source of luxuries that administer to all his wants. He is a domestic being, and there are his children, his wife, and his friends, all making his home a habitation of blissful joys. He is also gifted with intellectual faculties, and what a field for careful thought and deep research is spread before him! The Creator who planned all these things for us

in this world I *know* has the will and the power to do as much, or more, for us in another state of existence. There I leave the question, with a faith and trust that knows no change, and makes me happy and contented in every stage of life."

"Ah! that may all do for you, but I tell you, Harrie Clifton, there is nothing like seeing a thing with your own eyes."

"That may be the case with you and many others, but as for me, I can place the same confidence in my own unclouded reason as in my eyesight. Indeed, I always admire such men as old Cato for this very fact. He feels like a good and noble brother when he exclaims,—

" 'It must be so—Plato, thou reason'st well!—  
Else, whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,  
This longing after immortality?  
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror  
Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul  
Back on herself, and startles at destruction?  
'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us—  
'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,  
And intimates eternity to man.'

"There, now, Edward Marcel, if you have indeed reformed and can show such a living faith as ~~that~~ you may exclaim to your soul, as he did,—

" 'The soul, secure in her existence, smiles  
At the drawn dagger, and defies its point.  
The stars shall fade away, the sun himself  
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years;  
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,  
Unhurt amid the war of elements,  
The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds!'

"Harrie Clifton, there is one fact which convinces me that I am a changed man. Years ago I would have sneered at such quotations, or only admired them for their poetic beauty, but now I appreciate their intrinsic value, I can *feel* their truth; and I believe that he has had a view of the spirit land, for he speaks like one who has looked with open eyes upon a future state."

"You have much to say yet before you convince me that you have experienced a change of heart."

"What shall I say, or what can I say that will convince you? I have already told you that I saw with my own eyes people living in the next world, and is not that sufficient to change the heart of any man? You may take the most abandoned reprobate on earth, and if you can convince him, as I have been, that there is a future state, I know that he will at once reform. The spirits looked so natural that it was hard to believe that they were not real bodies of flesh and blood. They were so happy, so cheerful, and everything was so beautiful around them that words cannot convey to you an idea of the scenes which I was permitted to behold in the spirit land. Let it suffice for me to tell you that could I live here a hundred years longer, I would spend every day of that precious time in cleaning up my soul and getting it fit to live through the thousand million of ages which will now too soon be opened to it. I tell you, Harrie, I will not be long on this earth. The warning has been given to me, and I am very sorry that I am not prepared to die. But it must come; yes, Clifton, we must all die."

"All that is very true," said Harrie, "but it is very hard to believe that you have had a glimpse of another life."

"Harrie Clifton, can it possible that you doubt my word? What has made me a better man? What has brought me to repentance? What has made me conscious of my poor hopeless condition? (Oh, my God, have mercy on me!) What has made me loathe and detest vice? What has made me love the good, the pure, and the humble?"

"Sickness has done it," replied Harrie, "extreme sickness, which has caused a change of heart in many a one."

"Never, never! It could never have saved me," said Edward. "I had no belief in an hereafter, no belief in future rewards and punishments till I saw, with my own eyes, people enjoying and suffering whom I knew when they were living in this world. Now it was either a vision, or a liberation of my spirit from the body, or an inspiration of God that enabled me to look into futurity, and I suppose it does not matter much what was the cause of it, so that I profit by the lesson it taught me. It is a satisfactory proof to me that something must have been permitted to take place in a tangible, visible form, because my conviction was the result of an intellectual deduction from undeniable facts before me. Now, if I am not mistaken, the conversion wrought out in a state of sickness is the effect of an excitement of the moral feelings, and not an inference worked out by the reasoning faculties alone."

"One thing is very certain," said Clifton: "some-



thing has produced a wonderful change in your manners and general bearing."

"I sincerely thank you for that admission. I think you will soon credit my whole statement, the vision too."

Clifton smiled as he replied,—

"Will you give me an account of your return to earth? How did you get back again?"

"Indeed, that is more than I can tell. The first thing which I noticed after I became conscious of returning life was the comfortable fact that I was in a feather-bed, and that my wounds were dressed, my face washed, my hair combed, and a bowl of nourishment near me, with a silver spoon beside it."

"It is really marvellous the change that has taken place in you. I feel strongly disposed to credit what you say, and yet but yesterday I could have taken a solemn affirmation that you were the person who had, directly or indirectly, implicated me in the foul crime for which I now stand publicly accused. I could not think how it could possibly be any one else. I am so much a stranger in this world that I have but few acquaintances and fewer friends, and, as I thought, but one enemy, and that one Edward Marcel. Therefore is it any wonder that I have heard your confession with surprise and mistrust?"

"Well, then, now that you are satisfied with my penitence, will you forgive me for the great injustice which I have done you?"

"Certainly, most certainly I will. I have long since ceased to cherish any unfriendly feeling towards you."

"And do you think that the death of Elflora was caused by the great exposure to which I subjected her the night that she was in the cave?"

"There is no doubt but that was the cause of the disease of which she died."

"My God, have mercy on me!" exclaimed Marcel, in an agonizing shudder of remorse. "Did she know it?"

"Yes, she did, and freely forgave you, and prayed for you in her last moments."

The conversation was now suddenly interrupted by the sound of voices on the outside of the dwelling. When Clifton cautiously removed a shade from an aperture in the wall, he was astonished to see that it was broad daylight, and that the aides of the sheriff were taking their stations around the cottage, at a respectful distance from it.

"This is most unfortunate," said he. "I fully intended to leave this place before dawn, but your appearance has marred all my prospects. We must now stand a siege, I suppose, till evening, and then escape in the darkness of the night."

"We can do that," rejoined Marcel, picking up a rifle and handling it in a manner that showed he was no stranger to the business he was so ready to undertake. "Yet I am sorry it is daylight, because I have more to tell you which I think you would be pleased to hear. One great and grand revelation I must relate before I close. The brightest and most beautiful spirit I ever saw came to me and said, 'You must go back to the earth again and do all the good you can, and tell all your friends and all strangers who will listen to you

this eternal truth: be it ever remembered that in the memory is your heaven or your hell.' I asked another spirit who that was who gave me such remarkable advice. He said, 'That is Howard, the great philanthropist.' "

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## CHAPTER XI.

WE must now take the reader back to the glen-mansion. The family are in a quiet slumber, all save one, a long-trusted and favorite servant. So often had she stood around the festive board, so often heard the most unguarded converse of the domestic circle, that her presence seldom caused the least restraint in the utterance of words breathed in confidence among them. In this manner fragments of knowledge and family secrets were often gathered up by her careless and uncultivated mind.

This night, after all had retired, being troubled with much new information, she placed a light for a few minutes in a high window which overlooked the valley, then passing stealthily down to the back-door, she stood by it, evidently waiting an answer to her signal. It was not long till the dim outlines of a man were seen approaching with a noiseless step.

"Logan! Logan! is that you?" said the girl, as he drew near enough to hear a whisper.

"Yes, my darling. Is there any news to-night?"

"News! Bless your heart, there's more than I can ever tell you,—can't begin to remember it all! Clif-

ton's going away. He has gone to his cottage to get ready. We have had a big time of it here to-night, I tell you. Oh, if I could only think of it just as it happened! Clifton talked, and Mr. Irving talked, and Matilda cried, and Cora and Blanche cried too."

"And what was it all about, my darling?"

"Oh, Miss Tillie cried 'cause she is going to be married to Clifton; and Cora and Blanche cried 'cause she cried."

"But, come now, my dear little fool, ain't you lying about this matter most wofully?"

"Not a bit of it; it's God's truth, and I would say it if I was on my death-bed."

"But you must have misunderstood them. Clifton is branded as an outlaw, and as such may be arrested as a felon. Now you don't suppose that any girl is such a dunce as to tie such a millstone as that about her neck?"

"But they say it ain't so."

"What ain't so?"

"Why, that Clifton ain't an outlaw. They say he is just as clear as Mr. Irving, and Mr. Irving is the best man in the whole world, for I've heard Miss Blanche say so many a time. Now, then, you can't get over that, Logan."

"And you say that Clifton and Matilda are going to get married: when?"

"Oh, as soon as they can get it done. Miss Tillie is ready any moment,—got lots of clothes; her brother brought them from the city on purpose for the wedding."

"Hold your tongue, you little lying fool, you don't

know anything about it. Are they going to run off and get married?"

"No, they ain't; they are going to get married, and then go like decent people. I'm mad at you, Logan."

"Why, my darling? What's the matter now?"

"'Cause you keep calling me a fool."

"Well, now, my dear, I'll tell you how we'll make it all up: go and bring me one of Miss Blanche's best pies up here, and a bottle of good old Madeira, and by the time I've finished them both I'll be in a humor to forgive you for being mad at your best friend."

"Now, Logan, didn't I tell you t'other night it was the last bottle of Madeira about the house that I gave you? And I tell you, when Miss Blanche came to make the orange-pudding, and the cocoanut-pudding, and the almond-pudding, her eyes flew wide open when she found the Madeira was all gone,—she thought she had used it all up herself. She had to put in some claret, but she said it was a mighty poor shift."

"Well, then, I won't be particular; either a bottle of old port or a tumbler of good brandy will do, my darling. But be quick, don't keep me waiting."

"Port indeed! The last drop of it in the cellar went down your gullet before I let you know there was a box of choice Madeira about the house."

"Hush up then and get me some brandy."

"Oh, but you are a thirsty dog, Logan," said the girl, as she disappeared to get the refreshments.

"Now," said Logan to himself, "if it be so that Clifton and Matilda are going to get married, I'm out-

generaled out of a good job, and entirely too soon for my comfort. I'll get no more money from his rival if that's the case. Yet I hope the little heedless wench has got the bridle on the wrong end of the horse. But something must be in the wind. Clifton has been here, that is certain, and most likely, judging from what I hear, has re-established his character. Now, if it be true that he is going away, it is a very natural inference that Matilda will soon follow him, and then the de'il himself couldn't keep them from getting married. Ay, I see into the whole affair, and by the life of my soul he must be taken this very day. I must have the sheriff and his dogs on the track by the time the stars shut their eyelids to take their morning nap. Ah, here comes my little devil, with the cream of life and a pie in her dirty fist."

"What's that you're saying about me, Logan?"

"I was just wishing for my little angel to come, and no sooner is the word out of my mouth than you're at my side."

"You are very gracious to them that are good to you, ain't you, Logan?"

"Don't bother me," said the robber, as he crammed and turned the pie and brandy into him with both hands.

"Logan, tell me, dear, won't you, why does Miss Tillie and Miss Blanche and all of them keep a-saying they wish they only did know who Harrie Clifton is? What do they want to know any more about him for?"

"Well, my darling, you see, the reason is ladies should never be intimate with a gentleman unless they know him to be a man of good standing in the world.

Now, you see, you don't know that about a stranger, and Clifton is still a stranger among them."

"Well, so are you a stranger to me. Now you ought to tell me who you are. I won't give you any more brandy nor any more pie unless you tell me. Now tell me, won't you, who you are?"

"Yes, yes, my darling, I will tell you. I am a bright sun under a dark cloud. Now you don't know what that means. Well, now, I will explain it all to you, and then you will be so astonished and so pleased I am afraid you will be telling everybody that you are engaged to a great sun under a dark cloud."

"No, I won't tell anybody. I'll only dance with joy whenever I think of it."

"I am the only lawful heir to one of the biggest fortunes in England that was ever inherited by any man in this country. It is all invested in the best English securities. I have already given my lawyer a thousand dollars to establish my title and to get the money for me. He says the chain of title is so complete that there is but one little link wanting, and he is certain that by a visit to England he can find that without a shadow of doubt. He says I must give him three thousand dollars to bear his expenses, and to enable him to make a full investigation. But that will be but a mere trifle to me. He says the money is so wisely invested, and is bringing such a good interest, that by the time I get my fortune it will amount to fifty million pounds sterling. That will be two hundred and fifty millions of dollars."

"Oh, Logan, I feel as if I could dance till daylight ! But where will you get the money to pay the lawyer?"

"Never mind that, my darling; I am sure of that, but I must now bid you good-by. I have work to do before daylight, and that is not far off now."

The sun was some distance above the forests when Mr. Irving and family sat down to a late breakfast, but ere the repast was finished they were interrupted by the entrance of Francis Fisher.

"Very unpleasant news this morning," said he. "Have you heard it?"

"Heard it! No; what is it? We have heard nothing," rejoined Fitzwalter.

"It is rumored—yet I hope it may prove to be false—that Clifton is housed at last, and the sheriff and all his posse strongly posted around his dwelling, so that escape is impossible."

"What a most unfortunate thing it is!" exclaimed Cora. "Think they can take him now?"

"There's but little danger at present," said her brother. "I think he can hold them at bay till evening, and then make his escape in the darkness."

"Had we not better send some one to watch, and report to us everything that happens?" said Blanche. "Or shall we all go up in the boat to see what they do?"

"There would be nothing to see if we were to go now," replied the brother; "but towards evening, then will come the tug of war."

"We cannot wait till evening," exclaimed Blanche; and then to her favorite servant she continued, "Biddy, go tell Charles that I wish to see him immediately."

It was not long till Charles, the colored coachman, was despatched to the scene of deep and absorbing interest. Occasionally the sharp report of a rifle could



be heard in the direction of the cottage, then, after a painful interval of probably half an hour, several shots together, as if the officers were in warm pursuit of an enemy. Every moment that passed seemed to the ladies a long and weary hour. So strong and unselfish was the interest which they now cherished for Harrie Clifton, that all appeared equally anxious to do something for him. A desire was often expressed to open a communication with him to devise means to aid him. But what could they do? Only paint upon a man's character the corroding and indelible epithet that the law had placed upon his, and who will dare to shelter or to succor him? This, doubtless, is all right. We have nothing to say against it. Yet what a subject for thought and regret, that what is necessary for the protection of society does sometimes—ay, too often—crush the innocent in spite of every effort to prevent it. He who will scan the records of the criminal courts of England will at once acknowledge that this is a reality too real. There he will see a father hanging in chains, falsely executed for the murder of a daughter who had stabbed herself to the heart. And other cases as shocking to humanity may be found recorded in the same volumes. Why is this? The cause may be found in the undeveloped nature of man. When we have examined a subject to the very best of our ability, when we have carefully digested every fact, and listened patiently to all the testimony within our reach, we consider the evidence collected sufficient to decide the case. Our opinion is then pronounced, and supposed, of course, to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But—alas

for our ability!—a single month or year turns over another page in the book of time, and then we read that what we stereotyped as truth but yesterday is to-day a stigma upon man's credulity. Men and things we must study with skepticism and prudence, or we may link arms with the devil, or pocket a promissory note more worthless than the paper upon which it is written.

Now what can we say of Francis Fisher? He is really a very smart man in his own estimation. Is that nothing? It is the soil in which springs up to life and light the beautiful tree of faith, not in an overruling Providence, but in his own ability to succeed in the world. In fact, he was a remarkable specimen of that class of gentlemen that nature occasionally sprouts up like mushrooms and weeds among a rich variety of golden fruits.

The apparent fact that Harrie Clifton was shut up beyond the power of escape was to Francis a source of secret pleasure. While there was a probability of driving him from the country in disgrace, while he was regarded at the glen with suspicion, he did not wish to see him taken. But, now he was restored to favor, there was still a strong hope that a public trial might soil his name sufficiently to break up all intimacy with Matilda Seymour. In the presence of the ladies, however, no one manifested a more lively interest, a more open and talkative sympathy for poor Harrie, as they often called him, than did Francis Fisher. Having noticed that Matilda was more tender and confiding the more he talked in tones of kindness of the whole affair, he was everything to-day that could be expected from the warmest friend of both parties. Again and

again did he look out of the east window for the returning coachman, and when, at last, he saw him emerge from the forest, he could scarcely be restrained from going to meet him. The black was soon at the house, and being directed to tell all he saw, without question or comment he began,—

“I went on till I got within one hundred yards of the cottage, and then I stopped, ’cause, you see, thar was nobody else any nearer to it. Them ar fellows what lives down thar in the stone house, you know, they were all around the cabin, some on t’other side of the creek, and some on this side, and them what wasn’t on t’other side were on this side, and them what wasn’t on this side were on t’other side, and the sheriff was on both sides. He called out mighty loud and mighty often to Clifton that if he didn’t come out of that and give himself up like an honest man he’d order twenty rifle-balls to be fired through the door. But you might as well told a flock of geese up in the sky if they didn’t come down you’d shoot ’em: he never stirred, never said a word. Then the sheriff ordered six men to take aim at the keyhole, and all fire when he gave the word. Then he made another speech, but ’twasn’t no use. Yet they did not fire. I don’t believe they want to kill him. Just let the Governor say he’d give twice as much——”

“Now, Charles, we must stop you ; you are getting off the subject.”

“Indeed, Miss Blanche, you must forgive me. I thought it most respectful to explain, as I proceeded in dis bery interesting manner, in de elucidation of de very absorbing narrative. Well, now, you have dis-

turbed the gradual exfoliation of my thoughts, and I must reflect a moment upon de transactions as they were providentially presented to my observing mind. I saw—let me see—I saw—— Oh, missus, you hab disturbed de current of obsevation so much by de great kindness ob your bery lady-like interference ——”

“Now, Charles, we don’t want a sermon to-day. What did the sheriff do next?”

“Ah! that’s it, the sheriff. You have just unclouded de perspective influence of my mind, and I begin to contemplate de whole scene, the architecture of the cabin, the botany of all de trees, and de geology of all de rocks about it.”

“Oh, confound such nonsense!” exclaimed Julius. “Tell us what was done.”

“Well, now,” said the black, “the sheriff told his men to cut down a poplar-tree that stood near them, and then cut off about thirty feet of it, and then every one took hold of it and run the big end of it at a fast walk against the door.”

“Why, Charles! How big was the tree?”

“How big?”

“Yes, how big? how large was the tree?”

“Do you know how big a chestnut-tree is that will just make two rails when you split it?”

“No.”

“Well, dat is remarkable,—been to school all your life and don’t know dat. Well, Miss Blanche, it was just about the size of Miss Matilda’s waist,—just thar whar she has that ar goold watch a-stickin’ half out and half in.”

"Very good, Charles. Now I know all about it. What next did you see?"

"Well, I perceived they was a-going to do so much that I thought mebbe I couldn't remember it all, and had better come and tell ebry thing I had seen."

"Gracious heavens, what a negro!" whispered Julius Seymour, and then in an audible tone he exclaimed, "Did you not see them knock down the door?"

"No, I think not. If they did do it, it must hab escaped de observation of my memory in the multiplicity of the mighty magnitude of de transactions."

"Never mind, Charles," said Blanche, in a soothing manner. "Your report has been very satisfactory."

"Let me suggest a better plan," said Fisher, "than trusting to a servant a matter of so much importance: let us all go and inspect the operations for ourselves, and have dinner sent up to us."

"The latter part of that proposition," said Fitzwalter, "cannot receive my vote. A picnic in the woods would be but a poor substitute for a warm dinner this cool day. We may dine early, and then go prepared to remain till evening. Why, Charles, when did you get that letter?" observing the black handing one to Matilda with an air of secrecy.

"I just stepped up quietly to the cottage to speak a word of comfort to the poor boy, if I could catch his ear, before leaving, when some one whispered, 'Charles, Charles.'"

"Said I, 'Is that you, Master Harrie?'"

"'Yes,' said he; 'come this way, Charles.' Then he said, when I was close by him, 'Give this letter to Matilda and no one else.'"

Miss Seymour immediately opened it and read,—

“MY DEAR MATILDA:

“I am completely besieged in my little cottage. Every means of escape is entirely cut off. If our good friends are disposed to aid me, let them use every means, every stratagem in their power to induce the sheriff to prolong the siege till to-morrow, and not resort to extreme measures or a sudden assault to-day. I ask but the darkness of one night in this dense woods to place me beyond their reach. I am not discouraged by the adverse circumstances around me, but shall live on with a hope and a trust that nothing can shake or subdue. And let me beg you, my dear Matilda, to keep your mind in a cheerful, calm, and prayerful mood, for your welfare is, and ever shall be, dearer to my heart than my own. Yes, my dear girl,

“A warm request shall be my theme  
To God's eternal throne:  
That, pure and tranquil as the stream  
That rolls around my home,  
That he will keep thy youthful heart  
In every scene of joy,  
That who may come or whom depart,  
Thy peace may ne'er destroy;  
That when thine earthly walk is o'er  
Thou may'st with angels stand,  
That friends need not thy loss deplore,  
Child of the spirit land!

“Adieu, my ever dearest,

“Once more adieu,

“HARRIE CLIFTON.”

When Matilda had finished reading this letter over to herself about the third or fourth time, she requested the attention of the rest of the company to the first part of it, as it contained a proposition that all should hear. When the import of it became known every one expressed an anxious desire to go, without a moment's delay, to the scene of action. All was now hurry and confusion for a little while, and by the time an early dinner was ready everybody was prepared for a ramble to the cottage. The boat being rather too small to contain the whole company in its present damaged condition, they concluded to keep on the west side of the stream till they could select a good position for observation.

Mr. Irving, however, crossed over alone, that he might be near the sheriff, and that no opportunity might escape to render Clifton an indirect assistance. The rest of the party thought it necessary to keep at a respectful distance, for fear an accidental shot might send them a very unwelcome visitor. The gentlemen all declared that the only place of safety was very near the cottage, where they could be seen by both parties. But the ladies insisted on being far enough off to be secluded, and yet near enough to see what was done.

They selected seats on the west side of the great angle of the lake, but not in full view of the cabin, a part of it only appearing among the trees. This soon proved to be a most unfortunate position. A rifle-ball came cutting and whistling through the forest, and struck one of the ladies on the left shoulder, rendering her arm ever afterwards entirely useless. This disaster—so sudden, so alarming, so unexpected—broke up

the whole arrangement of the party, making it necessary that they should return to their own dwelling.

The afternoon was nearly gone when the company, with one exception, were again induced to occupy another situation in the woods; but this time so near the scene of strife as to be in full view of both contending parties, and hence in comparative safety. The first object which attracted their attention after their return was a general and combined effort, by the use of heavy levers, to pry out the corners of the cabin and make it no longer safe to remain in it. Several logs were actually started from their place before this mode of attack was met by a decided opposition. At last a ball from a well-aimed rifle ripped up the bark beneath the fingers of those who were exerting their whole power at the end of the long pole, and satisfied them that there was no longer to be any child's play in the stern resistance to their onset.

The sheriff, by assuring them that there was no danger, that Harrie Clifton would not dare to injure his cause by adding another murder to the charge already against him, induced them to renew their efforts; but, just as they were beginning to shake the building, another ball came and passed directly through the cheek of one of the men.

"There now," shouted another, as they all ran to some distance, "you see he intends to skin every one of us, and I believe he has so much confidence in his ability to do so with his rifle that he will keep shooting on till he kills one of us. Hang me if I like this business! The fact is, it's all confounded nonsense anyway, and it won't pay."



"What would you do?" said another. "You wouldn't go and leave him now?"

"No; but I reckon we could starve him out without tearing the house down over his head."

"Starve him out! You talk like a coward! Starve a man—yes, one man—out of such a house as that! Oh, my! If we can't knock that old cabin down in a few hours I'll never go home again! Anyhow, do you think he would stay there to be starved out? Not a bit of it. As soon as night comes he's off, and I'd like to know how you're going to stop him."

"Well, that may be so, may be all true as gospel, but how are you going to get the house down?"

"How! By George, that is easy done. Only give me a good pitching axe, and if I don't drop some one of these big trees on that shell and smash it to the ground, why then I never did cut down a tree, that's all."

"Good for Bill Stoops! By golly, that's a first-rate idea."

"What's a first-rate idea?" said the sheriff, as he came up to his men.

"Why, Bill says that if you'll find him an axe, and say the word, he'll drop one or two of these big trees on that cottage."

"Very well; do just as you please," replied the sheriff, "so that you do something. He must be driven out of that and caught before dark."

"So I say, boss; you'll not find him there at sunup to-morrow, I'll bet our old brindled cow against any milker in the country."

It was scarcely a minute after they had concluded

what to do till every one was busy in preparing to carry it out. Tree after tree was carefully examined, and the experienced eye of the woodman was not long in finding one which, if rightly cut, would fall with its whole weight upon the cottage and crush it to the ground. The one selected was a large and towering chestnut which stood on the north side of the dwelling. Great care was now observed in preparing for this mode of attack, not only for the purpose of concealing their intentions from Clifton, but to render it entirely out of his power to disturb their operations. A number of small trees were cut and placed in such a manner as to form a complete barricade, so that the workmen could not be seen or a shot reach them from the cabin. Having accomplished these arrangements without molestation, the humane sheriff, addressing Clifton for the tenth time this day, now implored him to come out like a man, and not remain there to be crippled or crushed to death, and explained to him fully what they were about to do, and the impossibility of escaping if he foolishly persisted in remaining within the cottage. But all to no purpose; like every other challenge, no reply was returned of any kind. The officer, being somewhat nettled at the perfect indifference with which his frequent appeals were received, gave orders to cut the tree, still hoping that Clifton would repent and surrender when certain that the chestnut was about to fall.

The news, of course, was soon communicated to the ladies that the siege was rapidly approaching a crisis. As soon as possible they were conducted to a place much nearer the building,—not to gratify an idle cu-

riosity, but to interpose the voice of friendship and humanity, and prevent or delay the execution of the horrible work already begun. The men had procured what is called a cross-cut saw, and were now busily engaged in sawing a horizontal cut into the north side of the tree, while one with an axe was chopping in on the side next the cottage. They had taken so much care before beginning to form the sheltering breastwork to screen them from view, that the unerring rifle of Clifton could not oblige them to give up their labor as it had done several times before. Again and again did the bullets whistle over their heads, cutting the limbs and leaves above and around them, now tearing up the bark on the prostrate trees, and now imbedding themselves in the green wood which formed the barricade. But all had no effect upon them. Fast and undisturbed the work went on.

The sheriff was often prevailed upon to have the cutting suspended, and to offer the fairest terms of capitulation to the recluse. And notwithstanding every advance was rejected, it had one very good effect,—much precious time was gained by it; and as the shades of evening were rapidly approaching, a hope was still cherished that darkness would intervene and enable Harrie to escape unnoticed ere the tree fell.

This ruse was at last suspected by that officer, and he became irritable, and threatened, in no measured terms, that if Clifton did not surrender while the sun was still in view, the moment it set he would not suffer any interference till the chestnut was down. On examining the tree, he found that about four-fifths of it was already cut through. He therefore ordered them

to take out the saw and drive in two iron wedges. This had a startling effect upon it. It trembled to its topmost branches at each heavy blow, and cracked loudly once or twice, and now evidently leaned towards the cottage.

"Harrie Clifton," he then exclaimed, "the level rays of the setting sun are already shining through the lowest shrubbery on yonder hill. You have but a few moments to decide. Surrender now, or die the death your recklessness so justly merits. Another blow upon this powerful wedge will tumble this lofty tree upon you. Stand ready, boys, and strike the instant that I raise my hand."

"Forbear!" cried Matilda, springing to the side of the sheriff, followed by the rest of the ladies. "Will you not grant him a few minutes longer? Let me speak to him,—he will listen to the voice of a true friend. Have pity, have mercy on him! or what mercy can you ever expect from God or man?"

"Woman, you must not, you shall not trifle with me again; you shall not intercede. I *will* do my duty. Stand back! Back with you! You have no business here; you are nothing but a selfish creature, an artful intermeddler."

"Do you address me, sir, as you would a servant?" sharply retorted the Beauty. "I *can* be firm, too! Ay, as iron in heart, as inflexible in will in a good cause as you can possibly be in a bad one." And as she concluded, with a proud and dignified air, she stepped forward and took a position between the tree and cabin, that the fall which should crush the latter should bury her in its ruins.

"Crawford," shouted the sheriff, "drag that misguided being from her perilous position! Instant death awaits her if she remains there a moment longer."

The one thus commanded immediately sprang forward and, with extended hand, was about to seize the maiden, when he was met by such an expression of the eye, such a haughty rebuke, such a stern repulse that he paused, gaping, by her side.

"In the name of God," the sheriff shouted again, "grasp her by the arm and hurl her from the place!"

Once more the hand was lifted in the act to obey, but was now checked by the exclamation:

"Peril not your life by laying a hand upon me. Look! From the cabin a rifle is aimed at your heart. The moment you touch me you will hear its report."

"Traitor, coward!" again shouted the exasperated sheriff. "What means this disobedience to my orders? Snatch that maniac from the jaws of death! Hear you not the commands of your superior officer? What! no movement, not even a reply! Return, sir, and consider yourself under arrest for contempt of my authority."

"Abandon your harsh measures, your wicked designs to-night," exclaimed Blanche Irving, laying her hand upon the rising arm of the sheriff.

"What!" cried he, "not another woman to overcome! Gracious God, do stand out of the way! Brown, Brown, this way, sir, and you too, Wilson. Now, sirs, if you are not faithless to the solemn oath which you have taken to assist in the execution of the law, you will do what I tell you, regardless of opposition. Go

now, compelled by a sense of duty, which honor cannot and dare not resist, and rescue that foolish, that fascinated child from the danger which surrounds her."

Forward the men dashed with alacrity, and each seizing the maiden by an arm attempted to lift and drag her from the spot. But instantly, with almost superhuman activity, she sprang from them, and retreated a few steps, and then, ere they could close once more around her, a shot was fired and Brown fell, then rose again, and fell and rolled bleeding to the feet of the sheriff. Being only wounded in the heel, but little sympathy was expressed for him, but a shout of triumph went up from the friends of Matilda, and was warmly responded to by an exclamation from the cottage.

And there stands the heroine, steadfast, majestic, and alone, her bosom heaving with emotions she cares not to conceal, her face deeply crimsoned by the aroused energy of her mental and physical nature. Glorious being! Her soul is absorbed by a thought so pure, so exalted that no reflection, no frailty, no fear can disturb it, but, like the sun gilding the storm-cloud, it reigns with a calm smile over the troubled elements around it.

The sheriff seemed astounded by the picture before him. Frustrated in every effort, defeated in every scheme, and at the very moment when victory was about to crown his exertions to receive a check and a stern defiance from the bravery and impetuosity of a single woman, was an event he had not prepared himself to encounter. At last, irritated to madness and regardless of all consequences to others, he exclaimed

to those near him, "I now call heaven and earth to be my witnesses that I have fully and faithfully discharged my duty to that fanatical and stubborn creature. If she has been deceived by my lenity, let her now take warning from the savage roughness of my manner, for I now swear I will suffer my life to depart from me ere I will be thus baffled and thus foiled in my official duty by the temerity of a woman. The work shall be finished. Strike, boys, strike down the tree!"

"Hold, hold!" shouted three or four voices at once, and then the entreaties, the supplications, the clamors of the ladies around the officer proved how keenly they felt that he was in earnest.

"To the rescue yourselves! To the rescue, or let her die!" cried he to their frantic appeals. "Her blood be upon *you*! I wash my hands from the responsibility of her death. Let her stand like a statue and perish. I shut my eyes and my ears against her. I will see nothing, I will hear nothing but the demands of justice. Boys, to your duty! Down, down with the tree!"

"Sir," said Fitzwalter, stepping up, "by what authority do you presume to take the life of an *innocent* woman? What crime hath she committed? What law, human or divine, will justify or sanction such a murder? Pause now, sir, or perish in *your* mad career. The majesty of the law is against you. Sacrifice her at your peril, and in the name of the living God I declare your life shall pay the forfeit."

Previous to this the honorable sheriff was looking sky-high and broadly about him, and blowing his

breath upwards with the air of one having public business on his hands; but by the time Mr. Irving had finished he was looking low at the ground, and seemed unconscious that the sun was down, and that it was already getting dark. Just at that moment the night breeze began to rise, and the noble tree, no longer able to resist the pressure, cracked, and then in one grand and mighty sweep came crashing to the earth and crumbling the cabin to a mass of fragments beneath it. One wild and thrilling scream went up from the group of ladies, and then in the pause which followed groans and cries of agony were heard, apparently in or on the north side of the cottage. All rushed to the spot. Matilda had escaped, but there lay a man in a dying condition. The chestnut in falling had smashed the barricade and whirled the logs about so swiftly that they demolished whatever they struck, and thus caused the accident. For some time all attention was directed to the poor and perishing sufferer. A messenger was dispatched for a physician, while others endeavored to make him more comfortable in his supine position. While thus employed darkness closed upon them.

"What light is that?" inquired Blanche Irving, directing their attention to a faint glimmer; but ere an answer came from any one a blaze shot up and a dozen voices cried out,—

"The ruins! the ruins are on fire! Water, water! every one get water!"

"Water we have plenty, but no buckets," answered some one.

"At it then with your hands, my boys!" shouted Fitzwalter. "Tear out and scatter the ruins! A dollar



I'll give for every book you save, and the cabin is lined with them."

A dozen active fellows were at work in an instant, but before they could remove a single log, a small explosion of powder burst out in the midst of the fire. Suddenly there was a rush to a safe distance, and a grouping of the whole company into little parties to consult about the probability of any further danger. One person said he was certain there was a keg of powder still in the dwelling. This, though a mere conjecture, prolonged the discussion so far that nothing could be done to save the contents of the building.

The sparks and burning cinders, driven into all parts of the cabin by the explosive blast, now caught the combustible material scattered and piled around, and in a moment the whole ruins were wrapped in broad sheets of waving fire. And then the trees, the shrubbery, the hills on the opposite side of the lake, the sparkling waters beneath, and the faces of the idle gazers were all lighted up into one visible, silent, and beautiful landscape.

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## CHAPTER XII.

THE next morning, which opened upon the world another cheerful day, was distinguished for its sadness, its deep gloom, and its genuine sympathy at the home of Mr. Irving. Every one moved about as if it were a quiet Sabbath. Matilda alone was not among them.

She lay restless and almost delirious upon her pillow. Deep sighs were heard, and her snowy hands were often wrung till they were bloodless. Yet she said but little, for by a powerful mental effort she kept her feelings smouldering within, and showed a calmness of mien which her heart could not feel.

Fitzwalter and Julius and Francis, accompanied by several others, went early to the ruins to secure whatever of value remained within it. The silver plate, in particular, it was necessary to remove without delay. As soon as they arrived upon the grounds of the cottage, they were surprised to see the almost complete destruction of the whole building. But when they reflected that it was composed of dry wood and contained within it several thousand books, many pamphlets and papers, and various other material equally combustible, they were satisfied that no other result could be expected. On examining the ruins more closely, the charred and blackened remains of a human being were discovered, directly under the tree which had crushed the cabin. On attempting to drag out the corpse, they found that a large limb had pierced the body and nailed it to the ground, evidently causing death instantly. When they had extricated it from its firm position, notwithstanding every lineament by which you can distinguish one man from another was gone, each one involuntarily exclaimed, "Poor Clifton! Noble, generous-hearted Clifton!"

"Gracious God! Who could have thought that it would come to this?" said Francis Fisher, as he turned from the sickening sight, and tried again and again to keep his eyes off it; but there was a something beyond

his control which bound him to it and kept his gaze riveted upon it.

When everything of value was collected together, but little else remained but ashes and smoking logs of wood and the blackened stones which had composed the chimney. A pair of pistols, a fowling-piece, and a long rifle were picked up, with their stocks so much injured by the fire that they were nearly worthless. A dark-lantern, badly broken, was found in the precise place, as near as they could judge, where the fire broke out. As it was very probable that the light used in the night was neglected and left burning when it was discovered that the dwelling was invested, it is very likely that this was the real cause of the conflagration.

Yet another conclusion may be more correct. Clifton may have found it essential, while conducting the defence, to keep the lamp replenished, as he was obliged to have the window-shutters securely closed and fastened. Be that as it may, the destruction of the cabin was evidently accidental and not the work of design.

Mr. Irving decided at once to have the corpse removed to his own residence, and Francis Fisher offered to go in advance to prepare the family for an event so sudden and unpleasant. By the time he reached the house, Matilda Seymour had risen and was sitting by a window in a comfortable undress. It was not expected that Francis would communicate the very unwelcome news to her; but, in violation of all propriety and a shocking disregard for her feelings, he rushed up to her room, entered without ceremony, and

related everything which he had witnessed at the ruins. No language can describe the effect of his narration upon the suffering Beauty. The sustaining and delusive hope that Harrie Clifton had escaped by some means unknown to her had caused a return in some degree of her usually calm and placid serenity. But now, when Death stood before her in all his cold and chilling realities,—and such a death! the contemplation of which brings a shudder upon the strongest nerves,—she felt that her fortitude was gone, that all mastery over her physical nature was at an end, and like a child she yielded and wept, and prostrated herself upon the floor in the agony of her sorrow. Day after day she remained secluded, and would see no one beyond her immediate family and those near and dear creatures that surrounded her and sympathized with her in all the trusting tenderness of devoted sisters.

In respect to the final disposition of the corpse, it was thought best to consult her. At her request it was interred on the northeast side of a prominent and isolated rock, designated by Blanche Irving as the “Fern Rock.” It stands embowered in dense foliage, on the west bank of the stream, about twenty yards from the water, and near the southeastern terminus of that rugged and lofty hill which forms, by its craggy base, the first grand curve in the lake. She chose this place that no recording stone would be necessary to tell where he lay, and that she might often and at any time visit the hallowed spot.

During the first few days after the destruction of the cottage nothing of moment occurred within the dwelling of Mr. Irving. But without, and in the darkest

hours of the night, a work of fearful import was being transacted, which we must now relate.

One gloomy evening, as Francis Fisher was about leaving the glen-mansion, a small note, written in pencil, was placed in his hand by Biddy, the quiet and deceitful servant. It contained a request that Mr. Fisher would instantly meet a particular friend at the "Summit Rock." This is a level and deeply-imbedded granite, crowning the summit of that high rocky knoll, about three hundred yards northeast of the dwelling, and which has already been mentioned as the place where Harrie Clifton rested when he related the eventful history of his early life. To this place Francis wandered, with an agitation of mind which plainly showed that he would much rather have walked ten times the distance in any other direction. As soon as he entered the woods near the rock he halted and gazed cautiously about him.

"This way, Fisher," said a low, gruff voice, so near that it startled him from its very proximity.

"Logan ! what do you want with me ?"

"Sit down, sir, sit down, and I will tell you."

"Well, what is it ?"

"The balance of the money, sir, I will now receive, if it meets your pleasure."

"Money ! the *money* ! Have I not already given you five hundred dollars ?"

"Yes, sir ; but you owe me as many thousand, and that comfortable little sum is now due. Ha, ha, ha !"

"Due ! You talk like a madman, like a drunkard, like a brainless fool ! You forget the conditions."

"Take care, my old boy, who you call a fool ! You

can't frighten me; and you can't get out of the bargain by your blustering and your lying either."

"Lie! Who is lying? There is no lie about it. I tell you, sir, the conditions have not been fulfilled."

"What were the conditions? Do you forget them already? Now, listen to me. Did you not tell me that the only thing in the way was Harrie Clifton, that if he was removed you could be certain of securing the hand of Matilda? And did you not say that if I would aid you, in such and such a manner, so that you could get Clifton out of the way, so that you could marry Miss Seymour, you would give me almost anything, you would give me five thousand dollars?"

"Well, what of it? I am not married."

"Now, Fisher, what has that to do with our agreement? What is it to me whether you get married now or next spring or the next year? When there is nothing in the way what else have I to do, how can I serve you any more? Now is not my contract completed? Yes, by God, and He is a witness to the fact. You know it is, and I will have the money."

"Logan, you are wrong. You were not to have it till after the marriage."

"Will you dare to tell me that again! Did you not say, did you not swear that there was nothing in the way but Harrie Clifton? Answer me that."

"Let go of me! let go of me! Don't put your hand upon my throat."

"Answer me then, you black-hearted villain, answer me!"

"I do answer you. I do not deny the fact that Clifton was the only obstacle in the way, but, before

heaven and earth, I solemnly declare that I made no promise that the final payment should be made before marriage."

"Now just look here, Fisher, that kind of talk don't suit me, because it don't pay the money, and I tell you once more the money I intend to have."

"Are you willing to wait till we are engaged?"

"Engaged! Is it possible, no engagement yet! What, in the name of God, have you been about?"

"Well, I don't know. We have a kind of understanding, I reckon, but not *exactly* engaged."

"Not exactly engaged," drawled out the robber, in the same slow and hesitating manner that Fisher uttered it. "Not exactly! Confound your duplicity and black deception! You always spoke of your marriage as a matter of course, as a fixed fact, as a certainty beyond all doubt if Clifton was removed. However, that has nothing to do with our contract. You were willing to take that risk entirely upon yourself. You declared to me, over and over again, that you would be entirely satisfied if Clifton was out of the world. He is now dead, and can never disturb you again. I am no longer in your employment. And why? because the work is finished, the deed is done. Nothing remains now to do but to settle with me, as every honest man would do on the completion of an agreement. This statement you know is all true. You know there were no 'ifs' in our bargain. You did not say, 'Remove Clifton, and then *if* I can get Matilda I will give you five thousand dollars.' Now, did you make any reservation or proposition or condition of this kind?"

"I can't remember ; I somehow or other think I did, or intended to do it."

"Oh, Francis Fisher, but you are a precious villain at heart ! I only wonder that you do not deny the debt altogether, and declare that you have no recollection of any contract being made between us. Did you not engage me to do something for you ?"

"Well—yes—I reckon so."

"You reckon so ! You *do, do* you ? Now will you please to tell me what you can remember about it ? What did you hire me to do ?"

"Well, I suppose it was to injure the character of Harrie Clifton."

"Or—go on, say on,—or——"

"Remove him in some way or other."

"Very well, so far. What did you promise to give me to do the whole business for you ?"

"You say that I promised you five thousand dollars."

"I say it ! Don't *you* say it ?"

"No ; only on conditions."

"Thank you, Mr. Fisher, thank you. I see now just what kind of a man I have to deal with."

"I am very sorry, Logan, that we misunderstood each other."

"Sorry ! Oh, yes, you are very sorry, very sorry indeed, and will be a thousand times more so if you do not pay the money, and that very soon."

"What will you do ?"

"What is it that I cannot do ? Your life, your reputation, your standing in society, are all, all in my hands. One word, sir, and you go like a kicked dog from Mr. Irving's door."



"I defy you! You have no power; you are nothing but an outlaw, a vagabond upon the earth."

"Very well, sir, I accept your challenge of defiance. The faded leaves are now falling from the trees above us, and I now swear before they are green with another foliage your reputation about these hills will be a curse to your mother in her grave."

As this sentence fell upon the ear of Fisher he trembled violently, and a cold chill seemed to freeze the very life-blood of his existence. Never before had he realized his true position. He saw at a glance that he was in the lion's den, and that nothing but prudence on his part could get him out of it. In other words, he was completely in the power of one who acknowledged no allegiance to the laws of God or man. Then, in accordance with his feelings, he answered,—

"Come, Logan, do not suppose that I will not deal fair with you. I believe I did say that when my object was accomplished I would pay you so much money."

"Yes," replied Logan, "and did you not state in plain words that there was nothing in the way but Harrie Clifton?"

"But I did not mean——"

"Stop, stop, sir! Do not waive the question. Answer in one word, yes or no."

"Well—yes, I did say so; but——"

"There, now, keep your 'buts' for some other occasion, they have nothing to do with our contract. Will you pay me this evening?"

"Pay you now! Why in such a hurry? If you will not wait awhile, suppose you sue me?"

"There now, out with your cloven foot again. There is so much devil in your composition that you cannot conceal it, even when it is so much to your advantage to do so. You know that I can drain the last dollar out of you without asking the law to help me. Are you going to do anything, or must I go to work myself?"

"Yes, Logan, yes. Let us try and have some amicable adjustment of this matter. I do not wish to give you any unnecessary trouble about it. I'll admit that your understanding of the contract is very plausible, yet I did not mean—however, we'll look over it. I'll give you ample and full satisfaction for all that you have ever done for me."

"When?"

"Why, as soon as I can make my arrangements."

"Well, Fisher, it seems now that you are coming to your senses, and you may be serious in this matter, or you may be lying about it just to bandage up my eyes that you may escape me. Now listen to me. I am a poor, penniless outlaw. I have no opportunity left me to make a cent in an honest way. I have not a friend in the world; all I ever knew have forsaken me. God has forgotten me. When spring comes and the flowers open their lips to kiss her, and the birds gather together and sing to her, I am sadder and more gloomy than in the darkness of the night or in the silence of the winter. I have but one friend in the world, and that is money; yet had I the wealth of the Rothschilds, I would give it all to bring back to my heart the innocence of my boyhood. I am tired of the life that brings no happiness, no pleasure, no comfort. Although I am a robber,

I am no fool. I see and learn every day that he who runs against the will of God, who lives not in harmony with His works, who tries to build up his own happiness in opposition to his nature, will always be miserable. You may think that outlaws have no feeling, that in their boisterous hilarity they are happy. That is not so. I never met a robber yet who was contented. Think you that when Blackbeard fastened down the hatchways of his brig and burnt brimstone among his crew that his mind was at ease? No, sir; and you can have but a very faint idea of the remorse that suggested that experiment to his mind. There may be a few, a very few, who do not feel their guilt hanging about them like a ton of lead and dragging them to the earth. But these are only exceptions, only one in a hundred. Many a time have I felt or dreamed in my sleep that I was lying upon my back, and that a rock as large as a house was resting upon me, and that God had His foot upon it, and that He would never take it off till I gave up my evil ways. Again and again have I tried to reform, but before I could accomplish anything hunger—yes, starvation—would steal upon me, and then I had no other way to do but to follow my old trade. Yet I went at it with a sinking and shuddering heart. Now, when you pay me what you owe me, I intend to go into the far West and change my name, give up strong drink, and buy me a good farm, and fix myself up so that I shall no longer have any temptation to be dishonest. Fisher, you know not how many men are honest because they can afford to be. Extreme poverty and virtue seldom sleep in the same bed."

"And you really think that you are justly entitled to five thousand dollars?"

"Certainly I am; that is the vital part of our contract."

"But you have earned it by the commission of such a horrid crime that you have no just claim to it."

"That does not alter your obligations to me."

"Yes, it does, in a very great degree. If it does not, it renders me in a great measure entirely independent of you. There is no legal mode by which you can recover the debt."

"Yes, there is, sir. You may not find it in your statute books, but you will find it here," said the robber, laying his hand upon his heart, as he continued, "debts of honor are always paid when the means can be obtained to do it."

"That is nothing," rejoined Fisher; "that is merely a code of agreement among pickpockets and felons, because you have no other way of enforcing justice."

"But do you not consider it binding on every one?"

"No; only on those who promise to be governed by it."

"What, sir! Don't you acknowledge it to be a principle inherent in human nature?"

"No! I never felt it."

"Well, Fisher, you are the blackest white man in feeling and sentiment that I ever met with. How your character has thus far escaped shipwreck God only knows. I suppose you have always had money enough for all your wants, and thus one great source of temptation has never crossed your path in life."

"In wisdom and cunning I place all my salvation,"

said Francis. "I never risk my soul in the committal of a bad act when I can hire a tool to do it for me, and I never jeopardize my money unless I am pretty certain that the recompense will be equal to the hazard."

"Don't you suppose that you are just as culpable," said Logan, "when you employ another to do a mean act as if you had done it yourself?"

"Not a bit of it, sir; not a bit of it. When I pay the man he takes the whole crime upon his own shoulders. It is a clear and plain compact between us that for a certain sum he not only does the deed, but freely accepts the condition of being the only guilty party concerned in it."

"And do you really think that you are exonerated from all responsibility when you can stipulate with another to act for you?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, Fisher, I have heard of people having their conscience seared with a hot iron, and I believe that mine has been considerably burned, but, my God, you certainly have none to blister!"

"Yes, I have, sir. I have just as much conscience as you or any other man, but a thousand times more policy. That's the word, my boy."

"Come now, Fisher, tell me candidly, do you not feel some compunctions of conscience for being indirectly the whole cause of the death of poor Clifton?"

"No, sir; no, sir. I have nothing to do with it. What is that to me? '*See thou to that,*' as the Scripture says. You are the Judas who received the money

and did the deed. And now you may go and hang yourself and go to the devil for what I care."

"You are a liar, sir! You are more guilty than I am."

"Call me a liar, you insignificant puppy!"

"Fisher, smell this rosebud if you please," said Logan, thrusting his pistol roughly against Francis Fisher's upturned nose.

"Don't shoot! don't shoot!"

"Very well," said the robber; "that depends entirely upon your own behavior in decent company."

"Good-night!" exclaimed Francis, rising to his feet and moving off quickly.

"Stop! don't be in such a hurry. When will you pay me?"

"Can't tell exactly. If you get it before I do, please let me know."

Francis Fisher walked away so fast after this reply that it was pretty evident that he had some fear of being recalled by his unpleasant companion. As he strolled and stumbled and blundered along in a reckless and careless manner, he muttered to himself, "Gracious God, have mercy on my fate! I am enchained like a prisoner at last. What a *fool*! oh, what a *fool*! to trust my reputation in the hands of a villain! My cunning must have forsaken me. Never, never before did I confide an important secret to any one. Now a robber knows the whole volume of my heart. What a poor, contemptible creature I have come to be! Oh, hiss, Francis, I despise thee for thy weakness and thy folly! Who will pity thee now? Who will not laugh at the dupe? Who will not shun

thee? Ah me! I must get out of this trouble. One more day of suffering such as I passed through this night will kill me, it will kill me! I can't stand it! I will not stand it! But what can I do? Will money quiet his tongue? Ay, while it lasts it might; but how long would that be? Oh, my God, forgive me! I'll kill him! I *will* kill him! There is no other hope of safety for me. He must die. But how, and where, and when? Answer these questions with wisdom, and I may be a man again. Pay *him* five thousand dollars! Nonsense! What security can he give that I will not have to pay it over again the next year? Clearly and certainly I am the most abject slave to him that ever lived. He can treat me like a dog, like a devil, and I dare not resent it for fear of exposure. What a terrible mistake to let an outlaw hold me as a plaything in his dirty hands and at his bidding, tremble at every whisper, watch with mistrust the glance of every eye, and look with suspicion on every crowd that approaches! This, *this* is more than man's fortitude can bear. And when will it have an end? Never while he lives. Year after year he will hold a power over me that I cannot escape. Farewell, then, poor Logan! your doom is fixed, the question is settled; you will be shot before a single hair is gray upon your head. But no second hand must strike the blow. The deed this time by myself must be done; and I will do it about ten o'clock at night, when God is listening to the prayers of kneeling millions, and then He will not heed what I am doing. Thus hath many a crime escaped His notice. It will be easy for me to satisfy the world. I will declare it publicly that I was walking in

the woods and was attacked by a robber, and in self-defence, and much against my will, was obliged to shoot him. Who would ever call in question my report? The poor devil has nobody to care for him. An outlaw is nothing, anyway, but a curse to the community. Precious little sin it would be to put a stop to his more than useless trade. He has no wife, no children dependent upon his daily labor. What difference can it make to him whether he dies now or twenty years to come? It will be all the same to him on the day of judgment. We hang culprits to protect society; I shoot one to protect myself. Where's the difference? Necessity in both must justify the act. But how and when shall all this be done? Let me see: I must not quarrel with him; no high words must pass between us; stragglers might be near and recognize my voice. Ay, I must not utter a single word, not a whisper must pass my lips. The next time he sends for me I'll meet him at the Summit Rock, and when within a yard of him will shoot him through the heart. How strangely comfortable I feel, that now my purpose hath a fixed resolve!"

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### CHAPTER XIII.

EARLY on the following day Francis Fisher took unusual pains in fixing up and adjusting a new suit of the finest cloth upon his handsome person. Well did he know the value and power of a neat, striking, and costly appearance. Often had he observed the most marked



respect bestowed upon elegantly-dressed Vice, while Virtue moved about in rags, unwelcomed and unnoticed. By the time he was ready to leave the house, his carriage and horses were at the door, in all the style and elegance of the reigning fashion. Every plate of silver about the harness and vehicle sparkled in the morning sun like stars upon the waters. The instant he stepped in he gave directions to drive as soon as possible to the residence of Mr. Irving. This visit, so early in the day, was very unexpected; but every one guessed, as they saw Fisher alight from his carriage, that some object of great importance was uppermost in his mind.

Entering the parlor with his accustomed ease and polite bearing, he glanced his eye around impatiently for Matilda, but perceiving that she was not present, he sent to her, through Blanche Irving, a very kind and very condescending invitation to take with him a morning ride. His solicitation was very politely declined. Being determined, however, to succeed, he exerted all his powers, and finally enlisted all the ladies, one by one, in his cause, and sent each one up to her as she came over, until Matilda was completely overcome by the continued pressure against her. Had they all approached her together and made their petition in a body, and then listened patiently to her numerous objections, they could not have overruled her.

About one long hour from the time she consented to take the ride she appeared, habited in a dress so very dark that it made a striking contrast with her calm, pale, and bloodless cheek. But the extreme loveliness and beauty of her features were not diminished by the

mantle of snow which her feelings had flung with such apparent coldness over her brow. As soon as they were comfortably seated in the carriage and under way her color began to appear, and a light from her pure spirit to beam from her eye; for all the impurities of the air had mingled with the dews of the night and had fallen to the earth, and a freshness like a breath from heaven pervaded the whole atmosphere and breathed a life like a new existence into everything that lived.

The brightness of this autumn morn awakened no welcome response in the bosom of Francis Fisher. His eye and thoughts were riveted upon the maiden before him. For a while the silence of contemplation and reflection was unbroken by a single word. The intense value of the Beauty, the scenes that had passed away, and the prospects of futurity were all surveyed by Francis ere he would venture to speak upon the subject most absorbing to his heart. He felt intensely the necessity of the most guarded prudence, yet he could not help smiling to himself at the impolitic course he had concluded to pursue. But so great was his anxiety to have some definite understanding with Matilda, that he might be prepared for every contingency in his future interviews with Logan, he resolved to press the question with energy, and if absolutely rejected, then to bid defiance to every foeman around him.

"Miss Seymour," said he, "this may be our last meeting, our last interview for some years."

"Indeed!" said the Beauty.

"Business of importance, I fear, will require my presence in Europe," continued Francis.

"Business! I was under the impression that——"

"Precisely so, my dear friend," replied Fisher, interrupting. "I am what is termed a silent partner, —rather to oblige others, I'll admit, than for my own benefit."

"Be absent long?" asked Matilda, thoughtfully.

"That is impossible for me to tell. I may marry there, and not return for many years."

"Any acquaintance in England?" inquired the lady.

"No personal acquaintances," rejoined Fisher, "but shall take out letters to several distinguished families."

"How pleasant! how delightful!" said Matilda, again speaking in a musing and reflective mood.

"Would you like to travel?" inquired Francis, with a more gentle and encouraging voice.

"Indeed would I, particularly if I could have Blanche Irving with me," replied Miss Seymour, in a more lively and sprightly tone.

"Suppose we make up a little party of pleasure, and make an extensive tour in Europe," said Fisher.

"That would be capital indeed," exclaimed Matilda; "the very thing! You could not plan anything more delightful."

"May I indulge the faint hope," said Fisher, "that during our travels——"

"Look at that beautiful prospect," exclaimed Matilda, pointing southward over a hundred valleys which lay before them.

"Very beautiful," replied Fisher, without lifting his keen and ardent gaze off the lady. "Tell me,—after we have wandered thousands of miles together, and

had a thousand opportunities of knowing each other, may I indulge——”

“Mr. Fisher, what very white object is that in the distance?”

“Only a sail upon the Delaware. Matilda, could you feel an interest in one whose only hope——”

“Look, Francis, what a magnificent tree, standing in yonder field! What kind is it? can you recognize it from here?”

“It is a tulip-poplar, Matilda; but that is foreign to my question——”

“Can that kind be transplanted?”

“Certainly it can; but, Matilda Seymour, you are trifling with me!”

“Francis Fisher, it is your own fault if I am.”

“How is it? Why is it?”

“Your own imprudence obliges me to treat you harshly.”

“Imprudent I may be, my dear child,” said Fisher, earnestly,—“love never professed to be a paragon of wisdom,—but my feelings should meet at least with a respectful hearing.”

“When I can entirely forget the past,” replied Matilda, mournfully, “when I can forget the only man I ever loved, the only one whose purity and brightness made me feel that man was indeed created to be the companion of woman, was made to cherish and protect her as a tender flower, was made to participate with her in her joyous communion with the beautiful forms of earth, *then*, but not *till then*, you may talk of love to Matilda Seymour!”

At the conclusion of this emphatic declaration

Fisher dropped his head upon his bosom and remained silent. Mile after mile was passed unnoticed by either, so busy was memory in unfolding a panorama of earlier and happier days. The coachman was the first to break the stillness, and the only order he received was to drive to Mr. Irving's by the nearest road. The passing of friend or stranger upon the way, the shadows of the old forests, the sunlight upon the fields, the splash of sparkling waters by the wayside, —all, all were passed unheeded by the sad occupants of the carriage. If their eyes rested upon them, but faint and glimmering images were conveyed to the mind, so strongly was every faculty of the soul absorbed by the deeper emotions of the human heart.

We must now leave them, to meet again on the following day.

When the family of Mr. Irving had retired to rest, the watchful servant, as usual, glided down from her room and met her lover at the door which opened into the flower-garden. Logan was so affectionate to his "darlin'," as he called her, that he drew from her every secret of the family. But what startled him the most was the very confidential news whispered by Matilda to Blanche Irving, that as Fisher was now sensible of the hopelessness of his suit, he intended to leave almost immediately and go to Europe.

"And when will he be here again?" asked the robber.

"He is invited," replied the girl, "to tea to-morrow, and well do I believe that he'll be here all the afternoon."

"Very well, then," rejoined Logan, "something I

have for you to do, my dear. You must give him this paper about ten o'clock to-morrow evening. You must also watch where he hangs his overcoat, and when they are all at supper you must go and examine it well, and if you find any pistols in the pockets you must open and knock the powder out of the pans, and then take a small piece of soft beeswax and stop up the touch-hole in both pistols, then close each pan again and replace the pistols in his pockets just as you found them. Now, my darling, do you understand what I mean? or will I have to come up here after dark and do it myself?"

"I can do it, Logan. I know just what you mean. I once lived with a militia captain, and I had to clean his pistols every time he shot at the barn doors,—he didn't always hit them though. But tell me,—you will now, Logan,—what do you want me to do that for?"

"Yes, my darlin', I will. I have a little matter of business to settle with him, and the last time we talked about it he got considerably excited, and it occurred to me since that if he had been armed he would have been much more impudent. If he is going away, we may never meet again after to-morrow night. Therefore he must settle with me before he goes. Now you see how necessary it is that we put it out of his power to injure me. If it is true what you say, that Matilda has rejected him, and that he intends to go to Europe, he will be as savage as a tiger, and probably far more dangerous. One thing is certain: I swear to you, my darlin', he shall pay me before he leaves. Now, you see, if he carries arms about him he may be inclined to stave me off."

"What does he owe you money for?" inquired the girl.

"That's another matter. It is none of your business, my dear little hussy."

"Help you then, will I? No! dog's the bit of it. I'll not touch one of his pistols."

"But listen to me now, my little dear. I will tell you all about it. Now I think of it, you ought to know it all. I sold him an elegant gold watch, and devil the bit will he pay me for it."

"Not pay you! The cheating whelp, I'd have it out of him."

"So I will, Biddy. But tell me, are you right certain he is to be here to-morrow, and that it is to be his last visit?"

"Yes, indeed, am I."

"How did you find it out?"

"Well, after all had gone to bed but Blanche and Matilda, I thought they would be saying something very interesting to young unmarried females like myself, so I picked up a book that was in the dining-room and carried it in and placed it on the centre-table, where it belonged, then I looked about to see something else to do, just to keep me in there, you know. Well, just then Miss Blanche put her little foot up on a chair before her and began to pick with a pin at the string of her gaiter,—it was in a hard knot. I said, 'Miss Blanche, please, ma'am, I'll untie your gaiter.' 'Thank you, Biddy,' said she, and then she leaned back in her rocking-chair and kept on a laughin' and a talkin' with Matilda, and then it was I heard Miss Seymour tell her several things about Fisher,

which she made her promise that she never would tell to anybody. You may guess I didn't try very hard to untie the knot. It was so good to hear them a talkin' and a laughin'."

"And you are sure you understood them that Fisher is rejected and that he is going away?"

"Yes, you may rely upon that; for Blanche said that she was very, *very* sorry, and would try and make it up between them."

"Well, now, Biddy, my darlin', you are a good girl, you are a sweet girl, you are a devilish fine girl, but you will be a thousand times sweeter and finer and better if you will just go and bring me a tumbler of brandy and the best pie in the cellar."

"Now, Logan, I want none of your flattery. How can I give you any brandy when the last drop in the demijohn went down your gullet only last night? You must wait till we get some more from the city."

"What!" exclaimed Logan, "the brandy out! Ah, that is poor housekeeping to let the groceries get out in that manner."

"Never mind it, my good fellow," replied Biddy, as she returned from the sideboard; "here's a pie that can't be beat in any house in the county. Blanche made it with her own little hands only yesterday."

"A bottle of wine or brandy, my darling, wouldn't spoil the flavor of it. But we'll look over that now. Come and take a ramble with me in the woods."

"Oh, I don't like to; it's so very dark."

"So much the better, my dear; if you are ashamed of your company, no one will see us."



## CHAPTER XIV.

A BEAUTIFUL afternoon, remarkable for the lateness of the season, found all the life and loveliness of the glen wandering about in couples through the forest, endeavoring, if possible, to awaken the cheerful serenity, the social gayety, and the buoyant feeling so much enjoyed but a few months before. Matilda, out of kindness, rested her snowy hand upon the arm of Francis Fisher, and from their earnest manner, the occasional tear, and the strong and emphatic language uttered in subdued tones by each, it was evident that a subject of absorbing interest, at least to them, occupied their minds.

"I am willing," said Fisher, "to do anything and everything for you. My wealth will enable me to build a residence wherever you may choose to live. There is not a desire of the human heart that I am not willing to lay at your feet. Every scheme which the imagination can invent to make you happy I will enlist in your service. I will build you a palace in the forest. Beautiful lakes of crystal shall flow through the valleys; barges of pleasure float upon the waters. Rich gardens shall bloom around you, bearing every flower and fruit of the earth. Houses made of glass shall shelter them in winter, so that you can walk in green alleys, fragrant with opening roses, when the

snows are white and deep upon the hills. Strains of heavenly music, at your command, shall be heard upon the placid waters, in the quiet groves, and among the highlands. Jewels of countless worth and gold and rich velvets shall adorn your person. Servants, in the costumes of royalty, shall administer to your every wish. Skilful artists shall place in every grotto the almost breathing statue. In the sultry summer you shall feel only the freshness of spring, and in the winter-time shall only be conscious of the chilling blasts as you behold, through orange-bowers and opening blossoms, the falling leaves upon the distant plains. And in our princely mansion the most gorgeous paintings shall adorn the spacious halls. There you shall behold the snow-shining mountains of Switzerland, the lakes of sparkling emerald, the groves of eternal verdure, and the romantic villas, embowered like gardens of Eden, among them; there the boundless desert, the dark-heaving ocean, the tempest, and the wild tornado shall live upon the canvas before you; and the glory of the past shall arise upon the battle-fields of Europe, and in living colors and life-like scenes unfold in grand perspective the eventful history of their iron days. Once more on the plains of Troy the ruins of old Ilium shall stand, and Scamander's bloody stream roll beside it, while Mount Ida looms up, dark and threatening, in the gloomy distance. Yes, my dear child, a thousand paintings shall speak to you in the silent eloquence of the visible world; while volumes upon volumes, in other apartments of our palace, shall give a social welcome and an intellectual entertainment so priceless, so enduring, that few minds could resist

their enthrallment. In a home like this, Matilda, you would soon learn to love me, and I would forgive and forget that you had ever loved another. Do not reject me irrevocably; think of my offer. I do not ask or solicit an immediate marriage, I entreat you now only for an engagement. Let it be consummated by a happy union whenever it will suit your pleasure. I am willing to prolong the interval a whole year, only let me be certain of you, that I may with unlimited expenditure prepare a paradise in some degree worthy of my cherished bride. Talk to your friends about it; they will give you rational counsel. There is no enterprise in life that requires so much reflection and forethought as matrimony."

"Francis Fisher, you know my feelings," said Matilda, "and I am well acquainted with the views of my friends. Your fortune offers no temptation to me."

"My precious child!" exclaimed Fisher, "how little you know of this toil-inflicting world, how little you are acquainted with the wants of society, how little you can now realize the substantial potency of wealth! Money represents by its diffusibility almost everything. You can procure with it all you need. You can have everything done for you if you have an abundant means to pay for it. Give me money and I can buy anybody, from a king to a clown, from a prince to a peasant. Yes, it is extremely probable that every man has his price; and it is equally probable that he is a fool who has no price. This is the doctrine of practical life, the whole philosophy of common sense, of experience, of financial wisdom. In fact, money is the foundation of all knowledge, all improvement,

all greatness, whether personal or national. Even our religion depends upon it for its diffusion and stability."

"How I detest and abhor such principles!" said Matilda.

"So do I!" exclaimed Fisher. "Do not suppose for one moment, my dear, that I sanction or justify such abhorrent doctrine. I merely state what the world knows to be a fact,—that money is the most powerful instrument, the most potent weapon, the most dangerous implement in the hands of man."

"It shall never be my idol nor my master," replied Miss Seymour, "nor anything that it can procure; and as I have already more of it than I want, I shall not marry to double my fortune, neither am I willing to marry to please any one but myself."

"There, again," said Francis, "you betray a great deficiency in your knowledge of human nature. You certainly have not as much money as you desire,—no one is ever entirely satisfied. This longing after countless treasures is implanted in our minds for a very wise purpose. The man who can command a million of dollars is a hundredfold more useful than he who is penniless. And why? Because he has this innate propensity to double his fortune. Hence he embarks in great and truly useful improvements. The howling wilderness is made to blossom with the fruits of life, the tumbling cataract to become an instrument of power and unsurpassed utility, and the trees of the forest and the minerals of the earth to assume forms of inestimable value and beauty. Now had he remained idle and contented with his lot, the dreary waste and the wild river, the oak on the hills and the

iron in the earth would have continued to this day in the solitude of their early desolation. And thus, my dear child, when man is apparently the most selfish in the pursuits of wealth, he is, by a wise arrangement of Providence, the most useful to his fellow-man.

"Now, Matilda, you perceive there is no sin committed by a desire to double your fortune, provided you make a proper use of it when you get it. Therefore, my dear, I wish to see you not only willing, but anxious to unite your destiny with a man of wealth, that you may be still more benevolent and still more charitable in your beautiful walk through life. Come now, my dearest dear, name the day when a new heaven and a new earth will be created by our happy union, will you not?"

"Oh, Francis, you are the most singular and unaccountable youth I ever knew; your perseverance alarms me. What *will* I do with you? Will you never be discouraged? Will you never believe me when I tell you that my heart is utterly, unchangeably, irrevocably another's? Now, after this honorable confession, will you not leave Matilda alone?"

"Never, my dear, never while you are single, because there is hope for the hopeful even at the last day. Harrie Clifton has passed away to a better and brighter world than this, and hence his rivalry is at an end."

"Not so, Francis Fisher, it is not so. In this heart, though frail and weak, his name, his image, his love hath a home that will shelter them, cherish them, idolize them till time shall be no more!" As she concluded this sentiment her whole frame became power-

fully agitated with emotion, and she turned away and wept like an infant.

"My God, my God!" exclaimed Fisher, as he smote his breast with his hand. "Oh, that I was only worthy of such a woman!"

Fortunately, at this moment Blanche Irving came up, and, taking her young friend by the arm, led her to a rural seat, and by tact and gentleness and a respectful silence soothed the mournful feelings of her favorite.

"How glad I am that he has left me!" said Matilda, as she turned a tearful eye upon Fisher, as he strolled away in the distance. "He will not give me up."

"Well, my dear, I cannot blame him," replied Blanche. "He loves you with an undivided heart; and you know it would be agreeable to all your friends should his efforts be crowned with success."

"Ah, that's it, my dear and confidential friend. Had I never known Harrie Clifton, it is impossible to say how far the influence of my relatives would have carried me in this matter."

"But Harrie has passed away," replied Blanche.

"Yes, he has," answered Matilda, "but the impression he made while here was not written upon a pool of water or on a bank of snow."

"No matter," replied Blanche, "all earthly ties must be broken and the memory of early days be expunged from the mind if they interpose a shadow of darkness and mar the comforts of the present hour. Let not your thoughts dwell upon the events of the past; you cannot alter their color now, and it is wise to be cheerful and contented when tears and sadness

availèth naught. There are two very important reasons why you should accept the hand of Francis Fisher. The first is, you will have two or three thousand a year to spare for charitable purposes. This will be to you a source of unalloyed happiness. The poor widow shall bless you in her lowly cot, and the tear of the orphan shall be shed for you as its little prayer goes up to heaven in grateful thanks for your care and kindness."

"Enough, my dear Blanche, enough! Do not persuade me. It is entirely useless. I cannot, I will not let any man stand between me and Harrie Clifton. His image is ever present with me. It would be sinful, it would be grossly wicked to accept the hand of another when my whole soul is absorbed by him. Yes, now that he is gone, and the memory of him is a sacred and hallowed treasure, I may acknowledge to you the depth and strength of my affection. My love is so ardent, so intense that I can scarcely breathe when it burns unrepressed in my bosom. I am obliged to hold it in check by a constant exercise of my iron will, or it would consume my whole frame, and soon leave me a withered, leafless, mouldering flower. Now, after this confession,—a confession which were he living none should hear; no, not even the object of it, for he should not know that he holds such a mastery over my existence,—will you continue to urge the claims of another?"

"Yes; I am resolved to do it. I am determined that you shall have Francis Fisher," replied Blanche, with more than her usual warmth and energy. "Nothing else will heal the wound that is now wasting the life-blood of your heart. 'Tis said that a new lover is a

sovereign remedy for all such heartaches, and therefore, actuated by the purest motives, the most disinterested affection, I shall insist upon it that you must not—indeed, you shall not—reject him again.”

“Reject him!” said Matilda, smiling mournfully. “If that would only discourage him there would be some use in doing it.”

“Well, I admire his perseverance,” said Miss Irving. “But let me mention another reason why I consider the match a very eligible one. Wealth gives its possessor a remarkable influence over mankind. In your exalted and shining position before the world you might by your word and example purify the whole current of society and give it a healthy tone, a moral dignity, an elevation felt, honored, and respected by the undeveloped masses around you. You have no idea what a blessing this would be to the community. When we consider that society too often receives its *ton*, its cast of thought and behavior from the wealthy few, we see what tremendous influence they possess. What can preaching do in working out a reformation, when it is opposed by the powerful example and the far-reaching shadow of a degraded aristocracy? Now, reflect a moment what a vast amount of good you might do by taking a seat upon the summit of fashionable life. Your beauty and talents and the high standing of your family, added to the wealth of Fisher, would enable you to rule and speak ‘as one having authority and not as the scribes.’”

“Then you would have me sacrifice my own happiness,” said Matilda, “and my own sense of propriety and my feelings of delicacy as a woman just to oblige



him, and to gratify a foolish and fanciful vanity in endeavoring to remodel society! I will not do it."

"You stand in your own light, my dear," said Blanche Irving.

"You are very visionary, my dear," said Matilda Seymour.

"Look yonder!" replied Blanche. "Julius and Cora are standing upon the Summit Rock. Go and send your brother to me, and then ask my sister what she thinks of my advice to you. Stop! Promise me before you go that you will ask her."

"Certainly, my dear; I will ask her, and may be just as much amused and influenced by her counsel as I have been by yours."

As there was not more than fifty yards between the parties, this exchange was soon made.

"Well, my dear Cora," said the Beauty, as her brother left them, "I come to solicit your opinion respecting a request of Francis Fisher. You remember that I told you last evening that he intends to leave very soon for Europe,—that is, provided he cannot induce me to enter into an engagement. I have concluded to reject him again and again, not from any particular dislike to him, but because my heart belongs to another. Now, after this candid acknowledgment, you may think it very strange that I should ask your advice. My reason for doing so arises from the fact that Blanche is exceedingly anxious that I shall have him, and will not hear to another rejection. Now as we all have the highest and most exalted opinion of your taste and judgment in all matters of this kind, we are both very anxious to hear what you will say about

it. What do you think of Fisher, and what ought I to do in a position so delicate and embarrassing and of such life-long importance?"

"I will not give you my opinion of Francis," replied Cora, "but I will tell you what I would do were I in your situation. I would retire to my closet and throw myself entirely upon the care and affection of our Heavenly Father, and ask him to be my guide, my counsellor, and my protector."

This sentence evidently touched a chord of kindred sympathy in the mind of Matilda, for she threw herself, like a fond child, upon the bosom of her friend, and bursting into tears, exclaimed, with tremulous emotion, "Kiss me, kiss me, my dear Cora! I have done it day after day, and I arise from my supplication sustained and strengthened in my love for Harrie Clifton. Why should I not cherish the same feeling for him now as when he lived on earth? I feel a divine promise that I will soon be united with him, never, never to part again!"

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## CHAPTER XV.

THE little clock upon the mantel in the dining-room had just struck the tenth hour of the night, when Francis Fisher arose from his chair and walked into the hall to prepare for his departure from the residence of Mr. Irving. While thus engaged a servant placed a paper in his hand and as suddenly disappeared, unobserved by any other person.

By the shaft of light which penetrated the half-opened door Francis read the note. It enjoined upon him an immediate visit to a friend at the rocky knoll, and strongly and poignantly did he feel that a fatal necessity required him to comply with this request. He concluded, however, that this should be the last time that an outlaw should hold his peace of mind and personal liberty at his disposal, and as the thought flashed through his brain he placed his hand very carefully upon his pistols, that he might be certain that they were still in the pockets of the overcoat which he was now putting on.

When he re-entered the parlor and bade the family adieu, every one supposed that it was a final farewell, that his absence would be prolonged to many months, and probably to several years, and hence, out of respect to him, they arose and followed him to the door, uttering many expressions of kindness and solicitude for his welfare and safety. And when he disappeared in the darkness of the starry night, they remained on the portico, indulging in commonplace remarks upon the weather and the future prospects of the friend who had just left them. They had stood there not more than fifteen or twenty minutes, when their attention was suddenly arrested by a bright flash and the loud report of a pistol in the edge of the woods, and then they were startled by a cry of "Murder, murder! Help, murder!"

"What can that mean?" said Fitzwalter, pressing his sisters, Cora and Blanche, to his side, as they nestled in a terrified manner under his arms.

"There must be robbers about," replied Julius, as he gave a like support to his sisters.

"But who can be the victim?" rejoined Mr. Irving. "How that sound thrills upon the nerves when heard at night, and when everything is quiet!"

"There it is again," said Julius. "Often have I heard it in the city, but it never had such a splitting horror and earnestness about it as this has. In what direction did Fisher go?"

"Not that way," said Fitzwalter; "his direct course would be down the lane."

"But he did not go down!" exclaimed Matilda. "I heard him open and shut the gate into the field."

"You did!"

"Yes; I am certain of it."

"Then he is murdered!" said Fitzwalter. "What could have induced him to go there?"

"Poor fellow!" said Blanche. "I suppose he wanted to take one more look at those scenes endeared to him by so many pleasing associations. But something must be done. I fancy that I can hear him groaning yet: can't you?"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed her brother, starting, as if conscious for the first time that a sense of duty required them to render immediate assistance to the sufferer, whoever he might be. A couple of lanterns were procured, and Fitzwalter and Julius and two of the hired men went in search to the woods. When they entered the forest they found Francis Fisher lying upon the broad of his back on the Summit Rock, and bleeding profusely. Carefully and quietly they carried the wounded man to the house. Not a word was uttered by him; he either would not or could not tell the cause of his injury. He was placed on a couch in the

northwest chamber, and everything done which benevolence could suggest for his comfort. A talented physician, residing in the neighborhood, was sent for and requested to come without a moment's delay. The patient repeatedly called for liquor, and the propriety of using it was overruled by his earnest supplications.

"Bring up some wine as soon as possible," exclaimed Mr. Irving, at the top of the stairs.

"There's none in the house," shouted Blanche Irving, at the bottom of the stairs.

"Yes, my dear sister, there is. I got a box of the best sherry last week."

"The bottles are all empty," said Blanche.

"Well, there's plenty of good Maderia in the cellar: that will do just as well," said Fitzwalter.

"That's all gone too," cried Blanche.

"Then bring up a bottle of the old port."

"There's none of it either," rejoined the sister.

"Indeed! Then we must give him some brandy: there's a demijohn of it. Let me see,—what did we do with it?" asked Mr. Irving, scratching his head thoughtfully.

"Never mind, my dear brother, the demijohn's empty."

"Empty!" exclaimed Fitzwalter, in astonishment. "Is there anything left? is there any water in the well?"

"Plenty, my dear brother."

"Well, then, what has become of all the liquor?"

"Used in cookery," said Blanche.

"Well done!" said Mr. Irving, glancing an eye at

Julius. "My sisters are the most extravagant girls I ever knew."

If the reader ever saw a comic actor making faces in a glass, he may form some idea of the appearance of Biddy, as she stood behind the door and listened to this conversation.

The doctor, for whom a rapid express had been sent, very soon arrived. A careful examination of the wound satisfied him that it would prove fatal in a few hours. Accordingly, he called the family together in another room and stated his opinion, and that he thought it their duty to inform the patient of his condition. Every one coincided with his views. When the fact was communicated to Francis Fisher that he had not another day to live, he broke out in the most terrible execrations against everybody and everything. The Almighty and His angels, the devil and his imps, mankind and womankind in general, and all the Seymours and Irvings in particular he cursed till the froth of his anger almost choked his utterance. It was impossible to calm or quiet him by words. When entirely exhausted, and no longer able to speak above a whisper, Matilda ventured to approach him. The kindest and most soothing language only awakened the wildest fury in his looks. He ground and gnashed his teeth, and tried again and again to curse her loudly, but the words died in hisses upon his lips. Then the beautiful maiden, with eyes suffused with tears, and face pale and agitated by the deep emotions which she felt, knelt down and offered up a fervent and touching prayer for his salvation.

Astounded and amazed at the sight before him, he

became quiet. A woman whom he had just cursed with all the energy of a raving maniac, and berated and insulted by the use of epithets the most foul and degrading, now kneeling beside him and entreating their Heavenly Father to forgive a dying brother was a picture he could not fully understand. How could she look over all that he had said? How could she forgive him? How could she pray so ardently, so feelingly, so beseechingly for one who had just told her that he hated her? These were questions which his undeveloped soul could not answer, and he remained speechless. At last that soothing language which she continued to pour forth with so much eloquence and power and beauty, and adapted with so much skill and tenderness to his situation, began to awaken a train of holier and better thoughts, and, as word after word opened up new scenes, he became tremulous with the purer feeling, and, grasping her hand, he sobbed and wept like a child.

"Matilda, will you forgive me? can you forgive me?"

"Yes, Francis, you have my forgiveness."

"Oh, no, no! It cannot be, it cannot be!" said the dying sufferer. "You do not know how much I have wronged you, or you could not forgive me."

"Yes, Francis Fisher, I can forgive you no matter what you have said or done; but, oh, do not think of me at such a time as this. Think of your God, of the bleeding Saviour. Unless you can in some measure walk as He walked and feel as He felt while on earth, what hope have you?"

"Listen to me, let me tell you what I have done,"

said Fisher, "and then, Matilda, you will turn and curse me."

"No, no, Francis; your confession of wrong and your repentance would induce even an enemy to forgive you, and I never cherished an unkind thought against you. I will do all I can for you; I will kindly nurse you, stay with you and watch over you with the care and tenderness of a sister; but you must be calm, be more gentle. You must turn your thoughts, with a living trust and an abiding hope, from this world to that eternal home which you are too soon to enter."

"Oh, thou pure and spotless angel! And I, yes, I have destroyed thy happiness on earth forever!" cried Fisher, with his tearful eyes fixed upon her. "Listen to me. Harrie Clifton was entirely innocent of the charge against him. I planned it all to ruin him. I hired a villain, a robber, to belie and defame and traduce him in the vain hope that if his life or reputation was destroyed that I would be restored to favor. A murder was committed in an adjoining State, and as the actor was unknown, I took advantage of the circumstance and induced the abandoned wretch whom I had employed to acknowledge that he was one who was engaged in it, and to become State's evidence and implicate Clifton as the ringleader. You know the rest."

"That is not *all!*" shouted a voice in a tone of thunder behind them.

The little circle which surrounded the dying man was startled on turning their eyes in the direction of the sound to see a ruffian standing near them. There stood Logan, gruff, grim, and savage as an untamed tiger, his huge pile of black hair curling like a bunch



of briers over his darkly-knitted brows, beneath which his fiery eyes scowled on everything around him. He held a pistol in his right hand, while the handles of two or three dirks could be seen about his person. He was prepared for instant defence, and evidently had such confidence in himself that he showed no fear in his present position. Before the surprise and suspense caused by his sudden appearance had subsided he commenced speaking.

"I need not apologize to you for this intrusion," said he, "when I tell you I come for satisfaction from that villain before he dies. He told you the truth, but not the whole truth. He told you that he employed a robber to do the work which he had not the courage nor nerve to do himself, but he did not tell you that when the foul deed was done he refused to pay the price which he had solemnly promised to do, but rather than pay it he preferred to take my life, and raised his pistol as soon as he came near and attempted to shoot me through the heart. The weapon would not obey his will, but mine went off, and there lies the hypocrite, too black in heart, too rotten in soul, too stone-like in feeling even to be damned. Let him dare to die and leave me unpaid, let him dare to ask God to forgive him, and I will shoot the blasphemous words back through his lips when he utters them. Forgive him! Let him make his peace with others before he asks forgiveness."

"How much does he owe you?" inquired Fitzwalter.

"Five thousand dollars," said the robber.

"Francis Fisher," exclaimed Mr. Irving, "you are not prepared to die, yet you have but a few hours to

live! Begin your preparation by satisfying this poor wretch, whom you have dragged lower and still lower into misery. Pay him and let him begone, we have much to say to you; pay him first."

The dying man hesitated no longer. He requested Blanche Irving to bring to him the small package endorsed "valuable papers belonging to Francis Fisher," and which had been entrusted to her care some weeks before. When, with trembling hand, he unsealed the bundle of notes and counted out five thousand dollars and handed them to the robber without a word, all shuddered at the sight before them. They saw the identical money which had been carefully folded and packed away, and promised to the villain at the very time the conspiracy was planned by them. They felt satisfied that it had been brought to Mr. Irving's and kept there for that diabolical purpose. It was a direct and palpable proof to them that the whole plot was a horrible reality, that Clifton had been sacrificed in the most heartless and malignant manner ever devised by human fiends.

When the robber had departed all remained silent for many minutes. They looked with such horror, such a loathing disgust upon the poor, weak, withering worm upon the couch that they could not speak to him. His features worked like a troubled sea, and the groans of agony which he uttered had such a despairing and terrific moan about them that they were appalling.

"Help, help me! My God, help me!" he cried out, with eyes fixed on Matilda. "My soul burns, it burns! Help me! I am sinking to hell! Oh, my God, help me!"

A minister of the gospel had been sent for, and as he now entered the room the hopeless task of preparing such a one to die was committed to him. Every effort to quiet his mind and get it to rest with a calm trust upon the mercy of God only kindled a deeper agony of suffering within him. He had knowledge enough to know that he had so often rebelled against the will of his Maker, and not ignorantly but conscious of his transgressions, that without a change of heart it would be mockery to depend upon a mere outward expression of words. He could feel that he was guilty, but he could not feel that his guilt was lessened by confessions. The minister looked for a preparation faster than he could gain it. Gradually, as the patient became more exhausted, he became more governable. At last, when questioned, he ceased to answer, but the contortions of his frame and features manifested a continuance of the mental fire raging unsubdued. As it was evident that his strength was failing rapidly, all gathered around his couch, in momentary expectation that every breath would be his last. Suddenly his eye lighted up with an unnatural gleam and became fixed upon some object behind them. They turned, and there stood Harrie Clifton. A scream of joy burst from the ladies, and with open arms they sprang towards him. He received them with speechless emotion, and lifting his hand pointed to the couch. Again their eyes were turned upon it,—the culprit was dead!

## CHAPTER XVI.

"'Tis very strange," said Blanche Irving, as she entered the parlor with a little bell in her hand. "We've been hunting Biddy in every nook and corner, and we cannot find her. I sent the other servants to the barn and to all the tenant-houses on the place, and she can't be found. Breakfast has been ready this half-hour or more, and we have no one to wait on the table. I've rung the bell at every door and window, and yet the lazy little hussy don't make her appearance. I'll be bound, if I get my eyes on her again, I'll give it to her!"

"She must have gone with the corpse out of respect to it," said Cora.

"The corpse!" exclaimed Matilda. "Has it not been laid out in this house?"

"No, indeed!" replied Blanche. "Brother ordered the men to get an old cart and put some straw in it, and to throw the body on it, and then to haul it over to Fisher's own residence; and I believe they did it before daylight."

"Why, Blanche Irving!" exclaimed Gertrude. "You never were more mistaken in all your life. It was the foreman who gave that order; and when brother heard it he rebuked him at once for his want of feeling, and said the corpse should be sent home in a carriage. It has not yet been removed, and is in the room where he died."

At the conclusion of this sentence Matilda arose and quietly withdrew from the company, and with a noiseless step ascended the stairs and entered the chamber alone. There before her lay the corpse, but not in appearance like a natural sleep, as you often see it, but with a haggard expression, as if the last thought on earth which he had formed was bitter, blighting, and hopeless.

“Poor misguided youth !” said Matilda, as she laid her hand upon his cold forehead. “Unfortunate victim of a most terrible infatuation ! Oh, hopeless love, what a fearful thing thou art ! I cannot forgive myself for being indirectly the cause of this death. Had I never seen thee, never smiled upon thee, never allowed thee to rejoice in my presence, never permitted thee to indulge for one moment a delusive hope, it might have been otherwise,—thou wouldst now have been living. Thou mightst ere long have led some gentle bride to the altar, and might have experienced a growing happiness in all thine after-years, and now to be thus cut off ! So young, so exuberant of life, so blest with all outward means to make existence a pleasure, and now to fall without a tear, without a hand to soothe, a voice to mourn for thee ! Oh, Vice, how weak, how miserable, how pitiable, how powerless thou art compared with the giant strength of a practical Virtue !”

“Ah, my dear Matilda,” said Cora, as she entered the door and drew near, “he does not deserve your pity. He came very near making your heart a widowed heart forever. I feel shocked and dishonored that such a being was ever a welcome guest in this family.”

"So did the angels of heaven feel, my dear," replied Matilda, "when they discovered that Lucifer had fallen from his high estate; at least, I suppose they did, but it was no disgrace to them. Your family is above reproach. We have another memorable example in our history that should quiet your feelings. General Arnold was greatly respected by our ever dear and beloved Washington; but, alas! like Satan, he fell, and now 'none so poor as to do him reverence.' Yet no one could consider it a disparagement to the commander-in-chief that the traitor had once possessed his confidence and friendship. The respect that is paid to wealth in this world enabled Fisher to move in the highest circle of fashionable life, and it is very probable that our frailty is very much to blame for it. Very seldom are we guilty of the strange idolatry of worshipping at a shrine dressed in rags."

"Very true, Matilda," replied Cora; "but I like to see wealth and piety combined, like light and warmth in the sun. The one will comfort us, while the other illuminates our path to eternity."

"That little hussy has not made her appearance yet," said Blanche, as they again entered the parlor. "No one on the place can give any account of her. We must go to breakfast; everything is getting cold."

"Let me tell you what has become of her," said Clifton, as he joined them at the table. "I beg leave to offer the conjecture that she has gone off with that bushy-headed robber. I reckon she considers him a gentleman of fortune now, and we may hear of Biddy Megonegal being married to Mr. Somebody, who has retired on a small competency from the cares and toils

of a very lucrative business to enjoy the comforts of repose."

"Shame on you," said Blanche, "to think that *our* Biddy, whom we have had in the family for years, and whom I have instructed to say her catechism every Sabbath without fail, should be so derelict in her duty! No, no! Biddy is only a truant little hussy, not an abandoned woman."

"Was she in the habit of keeping company with any one very late at night?"

"Never, to the very best of my knowledge; in fact, ever since she has lived with us she never has had a beau. That you may rely upon."

"Why are you so very certain of that, Miss Irving?"

"Because she always, invariably, without an exception, goes to bed before I do. Now at what other time could she have company without some of us seeing her?"

"I am very much mistaken," said Clifton, "if I did not see her several times in company with a man after you had all retired to rest."

"Then you *are* mistaken," said Blanche, in a tone and manner the most positive which she could assume. "It could not have been our Biddy. What kind of a looking man was he?"

"Well, that I cannot exactly say. I do not suppose I would know him now were I to meet him in this room. I only saw him when I was in constant danger of being seen myself. It occurred when I was very cautiously watching about this house and endeavoring to open a communication with you. I remember they were very much in my way. He looked like the rob-

ber,—that is, his general outline corresponded with the description which you lately gave me of that distinguished individual.”

“You may have seen the robber,” rejoined Blanche; “but you *did not* see our Biddy with him. Why, I have trusted that girl with the keys of nearly every lock in this house. She was a very prudent and very upright servant.”

“You will please excuse me,” said Clifton. “I may be entirely wrong in my conjecture. Let us be more generous in our conclusions. Let us suppose that she was so terrified at the sight of the bold robber that she ran off and has not yet stopped to look behind her.”

“Well, that is much more like the truth,” said Blanche, “than your first unkind supposition. Biddy was a very timid creature.”

After the morning repast was finished and the whole family had assembled together in the parlor, Harrie Clifton was requested to give them a full account of his miraculous escape.

“I cannot conceive,” said Constance, “how a man could be killed, and burned to a cinder, and buried, and then rise again from the grave and come back to us, and look as well as you do.”

“Don’t you think it very probable,” inquired Clifton, “that there was another person in the cottage with me, and that he was the one upon whom the tree fell?”

“Well, now, I never thought of that,” replied the lady. “All of us were so very certain that you were alone when the cabin was destroyed that the possi-



bility of any one being with you never entered my mind."

"You will all be surprised when I tell you," said Clifton, "that the person who was in there with me, and who was so suddenly killed, and whom you buried with so much honor and respect by the side of the Fern Rock, was Edward Marcel. I saw the funeral. I happened to be concealed in a place from which I could see all your movements. I felt certain that you thought you were getting rid of me in a very handsome manner, and would never be troubled with me again. It produced a very singular sensation to be sitting up in the woods and looking at my own burial. And when you walked slowly up and took a last look at the coffin in the grave, I felt a very strong inclination to step up and look in too, being a very near relative of Harrie Clifton's family."

"Oh, why didn't you do it?" exclaimed the lady; "it would have produced such a singular sensation."

"Circumstances would not permit my appearance among you," said Harrie, "or you would very soon have seen me there, particularly at the funeral dinner, for I had a ravenous appetite and no very good means of satisfying it."

"How did it happen that Marcel was with you in the cottage?" inquired Matilda.

"Well, the fact is he had broken up the bad habits of his youth, and felt so penitent that he could not be contented till he found me out and made ample apology for the wrongs which he had done me. I believe he had become a good man. He seemed indifferent about his life, and only wished to prolong it that he

might be the better prepared to die. I will tell you at some other time what it was that caused this remarkable change in his career. His case is a very striking instance of a man being frightened out of all inclination to follow the degrading pursuits of this world. Now, with regard to the misfortune at the cottage. We secreted ourselves in the vault, which you remember passes under the foundation of the cabin and into the hill on the outside of it. There we were safe enough before the tree fell. But just at the moment, I suppose, when the tree was beginning to fall, Marcel went up into the room to make one more observation and see what our enemies were doing. Almost the very instant he left me there came that mighty crash, and I never saw him again."

"How did you get out?"

"Well, I had a spade in there with me. I had studied all about it, what I would do and what I would have to do in case the tree broke down the cabin. Therefore, as soon as it fell I began to dig myself out, and by the time the fire was under way I had nothing but the sod between me and the upper world. By cutting my way out horizontally I struck the surface on the steep side of the hill, and when the explosion took place and all was confusion around, and all had run to some distance from the ruins, I broke my mossy shell and slipped down the bank, and glided up into the woods, and there I lay down and had a full view of the conflagration."

"But why did you not let us know the next day that you had escaped?" inquired Matilda. "Why did you keep us in such a painful suspense?"

"I could not communicate with you without being discovered. Besides, it was a master-stroke of policy to let the news go forth to the world that I had been immolated in the ruins of my cottage. I felt a burning anxiety to let you know my condition. I saw the powerful influence that was at work to chain you to another being. I saw you leaning upon Fisher's arm and listening with all attention to his words. I knew that the eloquence of his impassioned heart was pleading his cause with a fiery and impetuous energy."

"Why did you not give me one little signal of some kind, that I might know that you were still living? I cannot understand it, how you could keep silent at such a time."

"Because, Matilda, my prudence and my wisdom would not permit it. Besides, you were entitled to hear all that he had to say, and after that, if you were satisfied with him and were willing to have him, then his right to you was sacred, and none but your parents had a right to say nay."

"You were, indeed, very foolish," replied Blanche. "You ran a most terrible risk of losing her. He was resolved and determined to succeed. Her family were entirely willing. We all encouraged him to persevere, and I was about to compel her by all the means in my power to have him. Now, only think of the awful precipice on which, unconsciously, she was standing. How she resisted all this outward pressure and the silent pleading of his wealth and personal appearance is more than I can comprehend."

"My dear sister," says Cora, "she has a friend who stood by her; one who infused a comfort into

her soul in its darkest hour of sadness, one who inspired her with a hope which your strongest arguments, the wealth of the world, or his personal beauty could not overshadow nor destroy."

"Well, however that may be," said Blanche, "her trial was severe, and her triumph has been complete; and I sincerely pray that she may never have to pass through such another ordeal on this earth."

When the conversation was interrupted by Clifton leaving the parlor, Julius Seymour arose, and after taking several turns across the room, as if engaged in serious reflection, followed the recluse into the large hall; there he found him walking the floor alone.

"Harrie Clifton," said he, "I owe you an apology. I ask your pardon with the entire sincerity of a repentant man. I have said many harsh things against you. I am willing to make any atonement that honor and justice and the sacred obligations of friendship may demand. I have been taught a most useful lesson. Heretofore I have looked upon man by a survey of his outward stamina and worldly prosperity. But you have taught me to look within for the only treasure worthy of an angel's love, for those qualities which will outlast the solid rock and the ponderous globe. I thank you for what you have done. If I can serve you now, signify your desire, and with Christian fidelity I will perform it."

"Your offer is accepted," said Clifton. "One request I have to make. Your sister Matilda is a tender flower. This world is a rough and stony path to tread. It is the will of heaven that she should have a friend on whom her weary brow can lean, and her heart in its

affliction find a sympathy more strong than woman's sorrow. Go, now, with judgment matured and mind enlightened by experience, and assist her in that choice which she has an undoubted right to make."

"Such a one she hath already found," replied Julius: "one who fills the measure of my judgment. He stands before me now."

"Will her parents sanction the generous confidence which you repose in the object of her choice?" inquired Clifton.

"What I declare to be satisfactory they sanction without a moment's hesitation."

"Then," said Clifton, grasping the hand of Julius, as his countenance flashed with the exultation of triumphant and fervent joy, "to-morrow! to-morrow!"

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## CHAPTER XVII.

A MONTH after the interview mentioned in the last chapter, and not a single day, as was fondly anticipated by the fortunate rival, an unusual stir was evident in the glen-mansion. Every countenance, whether speaking or silent, wore a bright and cheerful expression, every word was uttered with a smile. In every room might be heard either a low melody, blending pleasant ideas in harmony together, or lively conversations where more than one occupied an apartment. In the large and half-darkened hall a lady and gentleman walked slowly and confidently side by side. The

lady was dressed in a soft and flowing silk of spotless whiteness, so low in the neck that her rich and full bosom would have been exposed to view had not the profusion of dark ringlets which drooped in volumes upon it concealed it from the eye. From the uncommon care bestowed upon her appearance this afternoon, it was plain to see that her bridal hour was near at hand. The gentleman upon whom she leaned was so noble in his form, so handsome in his person, so pale yet intellectual in his features, that few would notice the costly clothing which he wore.

"Matilda," said he, in a gentle and soothing manner, "to-morrow, I suppose, we leave this delightful abode for the tiresome city? Would that it were otherwise."

"You do not like the city?" said Matilda. "Neither do I. Ever since our visit here I have become more and more attached to the country. I should like to live always by an old forest and a placid lake or river."

"Indeed! I am glad to hear you say so," replied Clifton. "I have just received a letter, in answer to one which I wrote last week, informing me that I can repurchase my old domain on the Susquehanna for thirty thousand dollars."

"Is it worth so much?" inquired Miss Seymour.

"Yes; it was considered very low when I sold it for that sum a few years ago. It is now more valuable. The present owner has not intellect and refinement enough to be happy in the country, particularly in a place so retired. He longs for the shallow frivolities of a city life, and hence would sell at a sacrifice. Of

course, I would like you to see the place before closing with him."

"Is the cave near it?"

"Yes, within a pleasant walk of my old and rocky home."

"And the beautiful groves, and the big forests, are they on the same property?"

"Yes, on the very same."

"And the river, can it be seen from the dwelling?"

"Yes, from the house there is a wild prospect of dense woodlands and towering hills, and the river foaming and sparkling among them."

"Then buy it, and we will go and live there, and Mr. Irving's family shall come every year and pay us a long, long visit."

"And do you think you could be happy in a place so secluded?"

"Happy!" exclaimed the Beauty, with her glorious eyes glancing on him, as a shiver of joy shook her frame, and her hand involuntarily pressed the arm on which she was leaning.

"If our happiness should not continue through life," said Harrie, "I hope we always will have the good sense to know that the fault is within ourselves, and not in the circumstances that surround us. It is all nonsense to say that this is a dreary and desolate world, and that man was made to mourn, and that misery is the bitter cup we all have to drink in this stage of existence. If we will be virtuous, temperate, industrious, and economical, we of course will be contented and happy. The daily observance of these qualities is as necessary to the development of the spirit as rain and sunshine and

cultivation are to the tree or plant that is to bear for us a golden harvest. There is nothing that we can do that will yield us any pleasure unless it has a tendency to prepare us to dwell with the pure in heart in the spirit-land. Our immortal nature is capable of an infinite progression, and just in proportion to the progress which we make will be our happiness. The mind may be so trained and developed in this world as to be in heaven before the natural death of the body takes place."

"How *can* that be, my dear?"

"The reason is plain,—because the kingdom of heaven is within you. No amount of outward beauty or grandeur or sublimity in our dwelling-place can make the soul happy. Neither can the approbation of God make it so if it is not worthy of it, and it is very certain that it will not obtain that approbation if it does not deserve it. Now you see it is very foolish to wait until we die to enter into the high and celestial enjoyments of angels. Since the preparation must be made by ourselves, let us subdue every remnant of vice in our nature, every low and impure desire, every selfish and worldly thought, and let us cultivate daily all the noble and beautiful attributes of the soul. These are the works and the pastimes and the pleasures in which an immortal spirit may engage."

"I do hope there will be no austerity in our religion," replied Matilda. "I dislike gloomy and stiff-featured piety."

"When you say that," replied Clifton, "you only say what is felt, I suppose, by every well-balanced mind. Nobody likes that harsh and iron gravity



which too many assume, more through fear than love, when they try to lead a pious life. Our lives shall be entirely different. Intellectual pursuits shall expand our minds till we can behold a God of infinite wisdom, of boundless love, of unchangeable justice, and not a tyrant upon a throne, administering His will with the partiality of an earthly despot. Remember, my dear girl, I am only saying this to you. I scorn the act of boasting to the world of what we are, or of what we possess, or of what we intend to do in the days that are allotted to man."

"Then you do not mind saying such things to me?" replied Matilda, smiling.

"Oh, no, as it is only one or two hours until you and I shall be one——"

"Do not mention it. I am so fearful that something will happen yet to prevent it. We have passed through such terrible scenes! I have suffered so much that I wish it was over."

"Have no fear, Matilda. Nothing shall or can prevent it."

"Ah, we know not what may occur. A trifle may be a giant one moment in its paltry existence. Suppose this house, like your little cabin, should take fire and burn down?"

"Very well, then we will have the ceremony performed at the Summit Rock."

"Harrie, you are too sanguine. Something might happen. I feel very nervous. I wish it was over."

"Matilda, it is a matter of surprise to me that you, who stood for half an hour so stern, so resolute, so unshaken when the tree trembled over you, should be so

timid now. I never gazed upon a picture more beautiful. Your eye and features glowed; your appearance was majestic; your dark tresses, floating about your shoulders at every motion, completed the *ensemble* of perfect beauty. Not a single symptom of fear was perceptible, yet you well knew that you stood in imminent danger of being crushed to death at any moment. And what has become of that glorious heroine? Can it be that she now leans upon my arm and talks of danger when there is nothing to excite the least alarm? Our enemies are all subdued; the cold earth hides them from our sight; they can molest us no more. Cheer up, my precious jewel! Be always what thou hast ever been, the good, the pure, the trustful child of God, and He will stand between thee and all earthly perils. May we not suppose that it was His love that saved thee from a fate more dreadful than a furnace of fire?"

"How? To what circumstance do you allude?"

"I allude," replied Clifton, "to the serious condition of things at the time when I became acquainted with you. Had we never met I think you would have given your hand to Francis Fisher."

"Yes, my hand, but not my heart. Oh, the terrible influence of money!"

"You see now, Matilda, how kind, how merciful it was in our Heavenly Father to place me here in retirement, and just at the moment when the arch fiend was about to encircle you in his arms! lead me out before you! Yes, the longer I live in this world the more am I convinced that an unseen hand is ever extended over us, and willing and able to help us, if we will ask assistance in the spirit of love and faith."

"It is a comfort to me," said the bride, "to hear you talk so. It seems that I am not worthy of so much happiness as to be with you always, to soothe you in sickness, to rejoice with you in prosperity, to stand firm and faithful in adversity, to read, to talk, to pray with you. It seems too great a blessing for one poor little mortal like me to possess. Probably that is the reason why I look forward with mistrust that something will prevent our union. You know that the poet says,

'Coming events cast their shadows before.'

May not something of this kind be the cause of the little cloud that now obscures the serenity of my mind?"

"Nothing can happen, Matilda. The appointed hour is near; the invited guests are coming. I hear the noise of carriages approaching. What shall we do? Shall we remain here?"

"No," said the bride; "my feelings are too full to see others now. Come up into my room,—no one will disturb us there,—and we will for the first time together pour out our overflowing hearts in grateful prayer."

And now that noble youth, in the freshness and power of his manhood, is kneeling in prayer, and that glorious creature, bright and beautiful as the morning star, is bending beside him with her hand twined in his.

Where is the skilful artist? I would have him paint for me that picture of devotion, not forced from terror-stricken humanity on the approach of death, not bursting from withered hopes and pangs of agony when

nature droops exhausted and overcome, not wrung from despair when sinks the last plank upon the stormy ocean, but gushing forth in the fulness of life with gratitude and love in tears and words of thankful joy. Yes, let me have that painting, and in my parlor I will hang it up, and in my days of healthful vigor those kneeling forms shall make me blush with shame if I should be less grateful to that Parent from whom my thousand comforts flow.

The east rooms, by the opening of folding doors, had been thrown together, and as the evening sun withdrew his rays from the apartment a dozen lamps cast a soft and more golden light over everything around them. A number of ladies and gentlemen from distant parts had been invited, and by an early hour a small and very select company had assembled to witness the nuptials of Harrie Clifton and Matilda Seymour. When everything was ready for the ceremony the bride and groom entered, followed by their attendants. Suddenly a murmur of admiration, suppressed by delicacy and refinement to an audible breathing, was heard among the audience. If ever a woman in this sphere of existence is angelic, it is when she appears at the hymeneal altar to become the partner of one on whom she leans with a trust and confidence only surpassed by her purer love for her Heavenly Father. It is then that her eye has a spiritual brightness and her features a light and loveliness and beauty which she never appeared to possess before, and her every movement has that buoyant and floating grace about it only seen when the soul sways the corporeal frame with a potency and power which nearly lifts it

from the gross earth beneath it. This was the ostensible reason why the most intimate acquaintances of the bride, as well as the others present, were startled and surprised into an exclamation at her transcendent appearance.

When the ceremony was over, the company were invited into another apartment to partake of the usual banquet. As there were only about twenty-five seated at the table the conversation enjoyed an unlimited freedom in its range, sometimes sweeping over the whole company, and exciting a pleasant smile or loud laugh in every listener, and then it would become more definite and confined to little groups of three or four, and then again it would settle down by the voice falling a single key into a gentle converse with either one on the left or right. In this latter way Matilda was enabled, without being noticed by others, to give Clifton a partial sketch of several of the most attractive guests.

"Who is that gentleman," he inquired, "who has a cunning wrinkle in the corner of his eye, and who is keeping the other end of the table in such a riot of good humor with his jokes?"

"You were introduced to him," said the bride. "That is Dr. Irving, the youngest member of this family. He is a walking library, made up of tragedies and comedies and prosy sermons and jest-books and other outlandish publications, mixed up with a very extensive knowledge of his profession. To quote his own words, he has forgotten more than the majority of students ever learn in one lifetime. You ought to know him. He is a perfect treasure."

"Is he married?"

"No, indeed! It would take a very remarkable woman to induce him to enter the sylvan shades of wedlock."

"That is nothing. Let him get married, and he will soon find that his wife, whatever she may be, is very remarkable. All women are remarkable. But tell me, who is that portly and dignified lady on his right, with an imperial air in the expression of her brow? Her laugh is so musical that I could distinguish it among ten thousand."

"I will not tell you who she is, just to punish you for not remembering her name when you were introduced to her."

"Well, but, Matilda, there was so much confusion. Is she married?"

"No; but she is *enjoying* a very long engagement, and that is paradise in my opinion."

"What! and we only engaged a single month."

"That is your fault, Harrie, not mine."

"My fault?"

"Yes, if fault there be. Why look so thoughtful? Smile once more, and then I will recall the word if so unwelcome to thine ear."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE bridal banquet is over. The guests have retired or gone to their homes. The halls are all silent. The only sound heard is a light-stepping foot in some chamber above. Every feeling is calmed, every feature composed. Undisturbed by a sorrow, unconscious of care, they slumber the moments away. The pure in heart, refreshed and restored, shall awaken with gladness and joy. Then sleep on, for the morrow is near. Yet how still and how breathless the midnight that mantles the world! Look out on the earth, it is enveloped in snow; the dark heavy clouds, all frozen to crystals on the hills and the trees, the first robe of winter have spread. And now the stars shining coldly are seen through the gloom, and across the deep valley, through the boughs of yon forest, a faint streak of light proclaims the nearness of day. The landscape is brightening; the hamlets of man on the far-distant plains are appearing to view. Once more the morning hath come. The sun, without a cloud on his disk, rises broad through the sky, and the light, the transparent light, reflected and glistening from a thousand white boughs, now pours through the curtains and awakes the still world.

One hour hath passed, and the guests are all gone. All gone? Ay, they are gone, and from the beautiful bride the name of Seymour has departed forever.

In the calm of the forests, in the barge on the lake, in the halls of the Irvings, that sound, so familiar and dear, will be heard no more.

A new volume of life has been opened before her. Its leaves are as pure as the snows of Mont Blanc. But every page must be filled, every act of her life in it must be written, and when the quarto is finished bright angels will read it, and if it meets their approval a welcome will greet her in the land of the spirits.

THE END.



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